



January–February, 2012
 Volume 29, Issue I
 Conserving rare breeds since 1977

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy
N E W S

Members Take Stock at Annual Conference

The Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas was host to ALBC's 2011 Annual Conference, "Taking Stock: Knowledge, Economics, and Rare Breeds" on Friday, November 11th and Saturday, November 12th. Over 100 ALBC members and guests convened for two days of clinics, sessions, dinners, and of course – zoo tours! Attendees enjoyed learning about rare breed censusing, animal husbandry, and marketing techniques from an outstanding lineup of presenters and appreciated the opportunity to network with members from across the country.

The first events held Friday morning were the Pre-Conference Clinics which covered an array of topics relating to rare breeds. "Breeding Rare Breed Rabbits for Productivity" was a popular clinic where attendees learned about one of the fastest growing markets in America – rabbit meat. This hands-on clinic included evaluations of rare breed rabbits, with a focus on production characteristics and successful breeding practices. "Tail to Snout: What



Above: Callene and Eric Rapp educate guests on how to select quality rabbits for breeding. Right: ALBC's Jeannette Beranger made friends with one of the zoo's Poitou donkeys during the conference. All conference photos by ALBC staff.

It Takes To Be Successful With Heritage Hogs" received rave reviews. It taught attendees how to raise hogs in natural, outdoor environments and how to select healthy and productive breeding stock. Presenters discussed hog-specific marketing techniques and attendees participated

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ALBC's History

35 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

1977

On March 16, the American Minor Breeds Conservancy (AMBC) is formed in Vermont. First membership meeting held in October at Hampshire College. First newsletter, *Peaceable Kingdom*, is sent out. Dues: \$10; 58 members.



1980

During an AMBC director's meeting, the fledgling organization almost disbanded - when the phone rang. It was Elmer Van Gheem, who traveled over 1,000 miles to attend. He was lost and needed directions for the last 5 miles. Elmer's dedication reminded the directors "if he had faith in our cause, so should we." AMBC lived to see another year...and many more!

Life Members

ALBC would like to give a special thanks to our newest life members who have chosen this way of supporting ALBC and its conservation programs. For more information on becoming a life member, please contact Ryan Walker at (919) 542-5704, ext. 109, or rwalker@albc-usa.org.

Ken and Oogie McGuire

Paonia, Colorado

Mike Palmer and Sue McAlister

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Basic annual membership is \$35, and includes the bimonthly *ALBC News* and the annual *Breeders Directory*. We also accept unsolicited donations. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. Please send changes of address to ALBC.

ALBC News welcomes articles, photographs, letters, and classified advertising for possible publication. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement by ALBC. Articles from this newsletter may not be reprinted without permission.

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Rapps Receive Bixby-Sponenberg Conservation Award

By Phil Sponenberg

The 2011 Bixby-Sponenberg Conservation Award (the award that is NEVER abbreviated) goes to a very special couple with long-standing contributions across a wide range of species and activities. Callene and Eric Rapp, winners of this year's award, are owners of The Rare Hare Barn and are active conservationists. Callene Rapp is the Senior Zookeeper of the Children's Farms exhibit at the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas. Her leadership within the zoo community has greatly helped zoos to appreciate that domesticated livestock face similar threats to their existence as do the more usual (for zoo collections) endangered wild animals. She has been instrumental in helping the zoo community educate the public about endangered livestock as well as endangered wild animals. Due to her involvement and leadership, the zoo's exhibit is currently home to 27 different breeds that are listed on ALBC's *Conservation Priority List*.

Callene takes this dedication to rare breeds home with her, where she and her husband, Eric, operate The Rare Hare Barn, an enterprise devoted to raising rare breed rabbits. This effort has greatly aided many of these breeds in avoiding extinction and has also assured that their production characteristics remain strong and available to other breeders. The Rapps have both been active in recruiting new breeders to expand the support for these rare breeds.

Their home farm also promotes breed conservation and the diversity so needed for agriculture's future by including important populations of Pineywoods cattle (including several with the rare polled variant), Jacob and Navajo-Churro sheep, and several breeds of chickens.

Callene previously served on ALBC's Board of Directors and Eric currently serves on the Board. Eric and Callene's enthusiasm runs the spectrum from the home farm to the nation and beyond, and all who have worked with them have benefitted from their ability, humility, and pleasant personalities as they promote and advance rare breed conservation. ❖



Chuck Bassett and Phil Sponenberg present Callene and Eric Rapp, owners of The Rare Hare Barn, with the 2011 Bixby-Sponenberg Conservation Award.

1981

One of AMBC's first rescues, the San Clemente Island goat removal/rescue begun by the "fund for the Animals," is completed.



1982

AMBC became a federally designated non-profit organization.



FROM THE CHAIR



By Charles Taft, Board Chair

This year the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy celebrates its 35th anniversary, which makes it a good time to reflect on how this organization has developed.

In the mid-1970s, a diverse group of farmers, environmentalists, historians, and scientists shared a concern for the fate of America's traditional livestock breeds. In March 1977, the American Minor Breeds Conservancy (AMBC) was chartered in Vermont by founding directors Leland J. Simpson, David Warden, Ridgway Shinn, James R. Nolfi, and Kristina Bielenberg. They recognized the significance of the genetic erosion that was occurring with livestock both in North America and internationally. They visualized an organization that would educate the public, conduct research on breed populations, and provide technical advice and support to animal breeders and farmers. By the summer of 1977, there were 58 dues-paying members. One notable member was Phillip Spenberg, a student at Cornell's School of Veterinary Medicine. Today, after 35 years of continuous involvement, Dr. Spenberg is still serving the ALBC mission through

his current role as Technical Advisor to the ALBC staff.

During those early days, wrote Secretary Kristina Bielenberg, the organization was "literally run out of a shoebox with dues barely covering the cost of the newsletter." There was concern about whether the organization was on the cutting edge of a new American agriculture or was championing a cause long before its time. Ridgway Shinn volunteered to act as first executive director, and the "shoebox" office moved to Hardwick, Massachusetts.

A definitive second phase of development began in 1985 when Libby Hensen was hired as the first professional staff member. Bylaws changes were made to expand Board membership in order to attract individuals from other areas of the country, and the question was raised whether moving the office away from New England might garner more national appeal. In summer of 1985, with the help of Board member Cary Fowler, free office space was obtained at the Rural Advancement Fund building in Pittsboro, North Carolina, and the office was moved. AMBC continued to grow and gain national status primarily because of its mission – conservation of rare breeds. In 1988, Donald Bixby became Executive Director. Under his leadership, in 1993 the name of the organization was changed in order to reflect a "broadening interest in conservation, not just of the rarest breeds, but also for more numerous breeds, which were losing genetic breadth." Along with this new name, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC), came the creation of the hallmark logo that is still used today. In 2002, Charles "Chuck" Basset became Executive Director. During the past ten years, he has strengthened ALBC by developing a highly professional staff, by increasing membership to more than 3,000 members, and by implementing programs and rescue projects consistent with the mission of the organization. Today, ALBC is the largest not-for-profit membership or-

ganization in the United States working to conserve rare breeds and genetic diversity in livestock and poultry.

Now ALBC faces another milestone event. In November, at the Annual Conference in Wichita, Kansas, Chuck announced his plans to retire at the end of June 2012. There was a standing ovation from the crowd in appreciation for his service to ALBC. Meanwhile, an executive search firm has been selected to lead the Board of Directors in a nationwide search for ALBC's next Executive Director. Internal interviews with staff and friends of ALBC have been completed. A description of the position, or Opportunity Guide, has been formulated. A search committee has been selected to interview final candidates and to present its selections to the entire Board. The membership is invited to refer potential candidates for this position to me at cvtaft@aol.com and I will provide the Opportunity Guide.

In closing, I want us to remember that as members, staff, and directors, we stand on the shoulders of many wonderfully talented, dedicated, and diverse individuals. Because of their efforts we can reach higher with commitment to the common purpose - conservation of rare breeds. The success of ALBC depends upon dedicated members, stewards of rare breeds, educators, and financial supporters. ❖

2011-2012 Rare Breeds, Breeders and Products Directory

The next issue of *ALBC News* will include a member update form for all members to update the information they would like to appear in the 2011-2012 *Rare Breeds, Breeders and Products Directory*. It is important that all members return the form to ensure an accurate listing in the directory, and to be listed in the online directory if so desired. Look for this form in your next issue of *ALBC News* and be sure to return it!

1983

Smithsonian magazine publishes an article about rare breeds and AMBC. Interest in the organization grows.



1984

First foundation grant received – from the CS Fund. First livestock census begins.



Annual Conference

Continued from page 1

in an interactive question-and-answer session. Another clinic, “Tradition and Techniques: Learning to Cook With Heritage Breed Meats,” took participants on a culinary journey through time as they learned traditional meat-cooking methods for heritage breeds and rediscovered old recipes. The food from the clinic was a big hit and included Silver Laced Wyandotte roast chicken sliders, Black Jersey Giant chicken soup with nutmeg noodles, and ground Barred Plymouth Rock German bier-rocks, among many other tasty heritage meat entrees.

The afternoon clinics were equally as interesting and engaging as the earlier ones. In the clinic “Quest for Quality – Finding and Maintaining Excellent Standard-Bred Poultry,” attendees learned invaluable information about how the American Poultry Association’s *Standard of Perfection* can be effectively used in evaluating their own flocks, and how to select quality breeding birds. The “Tricky Business of Managing a Breed Association” clinic provided an in-depth look at



Auctioneer Ryan Walker and “Vanna” Angelique Thompson led the live auction.

issues such as financial management and conflict resolution, and participants left motivated to apply the principles they learned to their own breed associations. The message (and title) of the third clinic was “Handspinners and Knitters Want to Buy Your Rare Breed Wool!” Those attending received a copy of *The Fleece and Fiber Sourcebook* and listened to book co-

author Deborah Robson explain the recent upsurge in interest in the rare breed wool industry and how sheep owners can generate additional income from selling their wool while supporting breed conservation.

Friday evening festivities at the Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center began with a silent auction that included many items generously donated



Zoo tours were a highlight of the conference. Attendees also enjoyed seeing a few “other” types of rare breeds too.

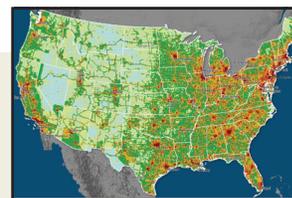


Guests enjoyed the Networking Dinner, followed by the live auction at the conference.

1985



Elizabeth ‘Libby’ Henson, daughter of Rare Breed Survival Trust founder Joe Henson, was hired to be Executive Director. AMBC moves to North Carolina due to the opportunity for free office space and a more central location.



1986

First AMBC census results are reported. Membership reaches 800.

to ALBC by our members. Tables containing the auction items stretched the entire length of the room, and bidding on several items was hotly contested until the moment the auction ended. Next, the Meat and Eat reception began. ALBC members and conference guests mingled over hors d'oeuvres (including a fantastic American and American Chinchilla rabbit liver pâté donated by Callene and Eric Rapp of the Rare Hare Barn) and traded stories about their experiences with heritage breeds. After the appetizers, dinner was served. The menu featured Pineywoods beef donated by Jess Brown of Cowpen Creek Farm and showcased delicious Pineywoods meatballs in mushroom ragout and a delectable beef stew. The reception was also the venue for ALBC's annual awards presentations (see page 2 and to right).

On Saturday morning, attendees returned to the zoo for a networking breakfast, followed by the first plenary session, "Uncommon Fare: People Want Interesting Food," presented by Hank Will, Editor-in-Chief of *GRIT* magazine and a contributing editor of *Mother Earth News*. Hank described the growing market in America for locally grown, sustainable food and how people who raise heritage breeds can capitalize on the increasing demand for their products.

ALBC Technical Advisor and noted geneticist Dr. Phil Sponenberg addressed eager listeners at the second plenary session, "Taking Stock 2011." He explained the complexities of conducting a rare breed census and announced that ALBC will be conducting another census in the

continued on next page

Missed the ALBC conference this year? Misplaced some of those notes you took? Some of the presentations given are now online! Visit www.albc-usa.org to view and download your favorites today.



Guests enjoy lunch between conference sessions.

Conservation Award

The ALBC Conservation Award is reserved for an individual or organization that has shown relentless dedication to the conservation of rare breeds over many years. At the annual conference, ALBC was pleased to present its 2011 ALBC Conservation Award to the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas. The zoo was founded in 1971, with the opening of the American Farm and Asian Farm exhibits, so its roots in conserving livestock extend to its very founding. The African Farm, added in 1990, further diversified the livestock offerings and expanded upon the already successful history of the zoo's farm exhibits.

Together, the farms house 27 different breeds listed on the ALBC *Conservation Priority List*, and the zoo contributes to conservation by participating in breeding programs with their animals. The farms are among the most popular exhibits at the zoo, and play an important educational role for conservation of livestock. Signage and tours emphasize the roles of historical breeds in global history and cultures, while educating the public about endangered livestock. ALBC congratulates the Sedgwick County Zoo on its past 40 years of achievements and looks forward to many more years of rare breed conservation and education to come. ❖



ALBC is honored to award the 2011 ALBC Conservation Award to the Sedgwick County Zoo.

1987



Laurie Heise becomes Executive Director. AMBC becomes the first conservation organization in the world to add poultry to its mission.



First poultry census is completed. Rare breeds semen bank established. On April 7, the last Randall cattle herd is saved from going to the slaughterhouse.



Rescue of Santa Cruz Island sheep begins. First rare breed show and sale occurs.

10 years



Annual Conference

Continued from previous page
near future.

Throughout the day, sessions were presented on a wide variety of topics, including giving farm tours, biosecurity, and farm economics, providing conference attendees the knowledge and skills they need to be successful on their farms. Some people who attended the conference did not currently own animals, but agreed that all sessions were very informative and helped them better understand why rare breed conservation is so important.

Between sessions, attendees reviewed posters set up by members along the corridors of the conference building and enjoyed zoo tours. The Children's Farm exhibits, which contain 27 different rare breeds, were most popular. These zoo exhibits list each breed's ALBC *Conservation Priority List* category to help educate the public on the importance of rare breed conservation.

Saturday night, the conference closing ceremony at the conference center began with a rare breeds buffet featuring Red Poll ground beef "barbeque steak" donated by Wayne and Sue Fish of Nine West Oak Canyon Red Polls and savory American Chinchilla rabbit sausage donated by Calene and Eric Rapp. The final event of the conference was a "live" auction. Membership Services Manager Ryan Walker served as auctioneer, and Operations Manager Angelique Thompson acted as "Vanna" (blonde wig, evening gown, and all!), doing a spectacular job displaying auction items for the bidders. The live auction was such a success that ALBC has decided to make it a tradition at future conferences. We look forward to seeing everyone in Raleigh, North Carolina for next year's conference, November 9-11, 2012! ❖

ALBC Annual Poster Contest Winner

ALBC is happy to announce Jess Brown and his Cowpen Creek Farm Pineywoods cattle poster and display as the winner of the 2011 Poster Contest.

Each year ALBC invites all conference attendees to set up posters highlighting their animals, farms, and the conservation work they do. Members enjoy the opportunity to read about and see pictures of other people's animals, and those displaying posters get to show off all their hard work. This year we had a terrific selection of posters and it was obvious that members put a lot of hard work into their displays.

This year's winner was chosen by Sedgwick County Zoo staff, who commented that reasons they chose Jess included the obvious time and effort put into making the display and the thorough historical documentation he provided through photo albums of his family's farm throughout the years.



Jess Brown shows off the new ALBC Member Logo T-shirt he received for winning the poster contest.

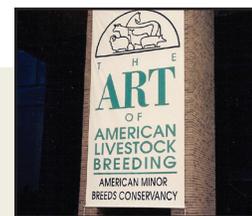


Pineywoods cattle poster by Jess Brown from Cowpen Creek Ranch.



1988

The *American Minor Breeds Notebook* is published by AMBC. Donald Bixby becomes Executive Director. AMBC works to rescue Ossabaw Island hogs. Membership reaches 1,000.



1992

The Art of American Livestock Breeding, a collection of paintings, debuted at the National Agriculture Library and toured nationally. Organized by John Dawes, the exhibit raised national interest and awareness of AMBC and rare breeds.

Thanks!

ALBC thanks all these individuals and organizations that worked to make the 2011 conference a great success.

Live and Silent Auction

Thanks to those who donated and bid on items in the silent and live auctions. We raised \$3,458 to help support ALBC!

Meat Providers

Jess Brown of Cowpen Creek Farm (Pinewoods beef)
Wayne and Sue Fish of Nine West Oak Canyon Red Polls (Red Poll beef)
Callene and Eric Rapp of the Rare Hare Barn (American and American Chinchilla rabbit livers and rabbit sausage)

Guest Speakers

Dean Adams
Carrie Balkcom
Sam Brush
Donna Carver
Patricia Foreman
Steven Moize
Deborah Niemann
Richard Pomeroy
Steve Pope
Diana Prichard
Callene & Eric Rapp
Frank Reese, Jr.
Jim Reichardt
Deborah Robson
Larry Sorrell
Phil Sponenberg
Karen Thornton
Anna Wulfsong Belt
Josh Wendland
Hank Will

Volunteers

Jess Brown
Cabell Garbee

Staff Speakers

Charles Bassett
Jeannette Beranger
Jennifer Kendall
Alison Martin

Special Thanks

The staff of the Sedgwick County Zoo.
The staff at the Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center

Thank You to Our Conference Sponsors!



SVF FOUNDATION



The William JJ Gordon Foundation



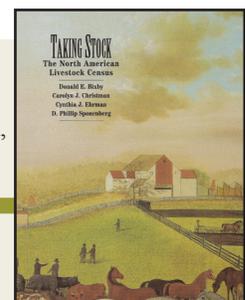
THE 1772 FOUNDATION



The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

1994

ALBC publishes the book, *Taking Stock.*



1993

AMBC name is changed to the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. A new logo is created to accompany the new name.

Photo Contest Winners

ALBC extends a huge thank you to everyone who participated in the most recent photo contest. The annual contest experienced unprecedented growth in 2011 with exactly 100 entries – up from just 30 in 2010. The photos were compiled into a slideshow that was presented at the annual conference and they received much praise from attendees. The top three photos were selected by ALBC staff and awards were announced at the conference. Winners received personalized gifts that were made with their photos, award certificates, and congratulatory letters from ALBC.

ALBC invites everyone to prepare for next year's contest by taking photos of your rare breeds throughout the year and to submit them when the contest opens for 2012. The annual photo contest helps to build the ALBC photo archive and is a way for members to showcase their animals and the work they do with them.

First Place: Wilbur-Cruce Colonial Spanish horses "Pilar" owned by Silke Schneider and "Sabana" owned by Marjorie Dixon. Photo by Maureen Kirk-Detberner.

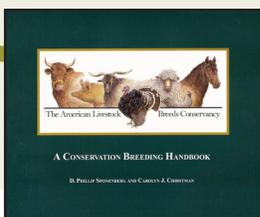
Second Place: Good Shepherd Poultry Ranch Bronze turkeys by Frank Reese.

Third Place: Silver Sebright bantam chicken by Meghan Brawdy.



1995

ALBC publishes the book, *A Conservation Breeding Handbook*.



1996

ALBC releases its first educational curriculum, *Noah's Ark Today*.



ALBC Staff “In-dy” Field

By Alison Martin. Photos by ALBC staff.

We are often asked, “How exactly does ALBC go about conserving heritage breeds?” As our members, you know that working with individual breeders is key to ensuring breed survival. One way for us to maximize our contact with many breeders and potential breeders at one time is to attend events and conferences that offer networking opportunities for the organization. We often try to work several conservation activities into the same trip to maximize efficient use of our travel dollars and time out of the office. This approach can make for a busy trip, but the results can be very productive. A recent example was the trip that Ryan Walker, Jennifer Kendall, Jeanette Beranger, and I took to the Crossroads of America National Poultry Show and to the American Rabbit Breeders Association National Convention and Show, both held in Indianapolis, Indiana, at the end of October.

The American Poultry Association and American Bantam Association held



Pictured left to right: ALBC’s Ryan Walker, Alison Martin, and Jennifer Kendall at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis.

their combined annual poultry show and meetings October 28 to 30, and more than 10,000 poultry were in attendance. The American Rabbit Breeders Association event was right next door from October 29 to November 3, and participants brought more than 23,000 rabbits! These shows were so large that each took up two buildings at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.

Events included open competitions by breed and class, junior competitions, and live auctions. Because these national shows brought participation from their associated breed clubs, it was a great opportunity for ALBC staff to network with these valuable partners. Breed clubs are an important source of census information, particularly for tracking poultry populations, because individual animals are not registered or pedigreed. Many of the most active breeders of heritage animals are also active in their breed clubs, so it is beneficial for us to stay up-to-date on the issues affecting the breed clubs and their breeders, and, in turn, for them to stay knowledgeable on ALBC’s activities.

In addition to one-on-one networking, ALBC staff presented two talks at the poultry show: “The Importance of Conserving Heritage Breeds of Poultry”, and “A Winning Combination: Improving Productivity While Enhancing Show Qualities in Your Birds.” Through talks such as these, ALBC’s technical staff can promote

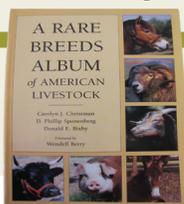
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ALBC’s Ryan Walker helps people learn more about ALBC at the American Rabbit Breeders Association National Show.

1997

Began an active turkey conservation program. Census found only 1335 breeding birds for heritage turkeys. *A Rare Breeds Album* is published.



1999

ALBC publishes *Birds of a Feather*. Membership dues \$30.



ALBC Staff “In-dy” Field

Continued from page 9

breed conservation and educate new and experienced breeders alike in maintaining the genetic diversity of their flocks. It is also a way for us to learn what is on the minds of farmers so we can continue to meet their needs. For example, in 2003 rare Icelandic chickens were imported to the US; some breeders are now interested in having these animals recognized as a breed and having ALBC become involved in their conservation. A few of these birds were at the show, and this was the first chance that ALBC staff had to visit with the birds and their owners.

An exciting opportunity at the Indianapolis events was the chance to photograph hard-to-find chickens and rabbits. As you know, we use a lot of photos in newsletters, talks, articles for outside publications, and in response to requests from the media. Around Thanksgiving many newspapers and magazines ran stories about Heritage turkeys, and several of these used ALBC photos. It is a wonderful way to promote heritage turkeys and ALBC’s work at the same time.

We are continually expanding our photo library, and a venue with over 33,000 animals and numerous breeds meant there was great potential to obtain exceptional photos of quality representations of each breed. With some monetary support from Tractor Supply Company, ALBC was able to replace its aging camera equipment, build a photo booth suitable for small animals, and travel to the two shows. We set up the photo booth at both of the events, identified high quality rabbits and chickens that met their breed standards, and gave invitations to the owners who then brought them to the ALBC booth for their



Rabbit judging at the American Rabbit Breeders Association National Convention and Show.

“star moments.” In all, we took more than 10,000 photos, representing 95 breeds and color varieties, and photographed a total of 169 individual animals during a very busy and intense week’s worth of work. We are editing and organizing the resulting photos, some of which will soon appear in ALBC articles and presentations.

Indianapolis offered two more conservation and promotional opportunities. The staff visited the National FFA Center and met with representatives to discuss ways for FFA students to learn about and raise heritage breeds. The meeting was successful and we found it beneficial to get

acquainted for future collaboration.

Following the rabbit and poultry shows, a visit to the historical homestead known as Conner Prairie was a fitting conclusion for our show-weary staffers. We were treated to a special behind-the-scenes tour that included meeting their heritage sheep, pigs, cattle, goats, and a particularly charismatic Runner drake that believed he would lead the tour. Our actual host, Kevyn Miller, told us stories about how these animals teach local school children about prairie history and breed conservation. A highlight of the visit for all of us was lessons in driving Randall Lineback and Milking Shorthorn oxen teams. It must be admitted that, in the process of being educated ourselves, we had a lot of fun, too.

The eight days spent in Indianapolis are representative of the networking and outreach that are so essential to ALBC’s conservation activities. We heard what is on the minds of poultry and rabbit breeders in the Midwest, renewed relationships with the national associations and breed clubs, and made new connections that are already strengthening and extending our program activities. ❖

Check our calendar regularly to see where ALBC staff will be appearing next!



Kevyn Miller with “Red” and “Blue”, Randall Lineback oxen from Conner Prairie.

2000

Conducted census of waterfowl and published *Taking Stock of Waterfowl*. Received award from Slow Food USA for our work conserving heritage breeds.



2002

Chuck Bassett becomes Executive Director. ALBC celebrates 25th anniversary. Membership reaches 2,583.

25 years



Conservation Hotspots Hold Genetic Treasures

By Phil Sponenberg

I have been thinking recently about “conservation hotspots.” These are regions where animal biodiversity is high, and where a more active approach to finding pockets of genetic resources is likely to yield positive results. ALBC has a long record of success when it comes to discovering new heritage breed populations, but a great deal of this has been somewhat reactive in the sense of breeders or others alerting us to the populations, with ALBC then following up on those leads. An active approach is somewhat different – going out and finding things! This is more difficult, however, especially in a landmass as large as the United States.

An active approach was implemented in Switzerland and has shown good results. The Swiss basically start at the foot of the valley and work their way up, knocking on every door and asking if the owners have any old, interesting varieties of animals, fruits, or other crops. That approach turned up some very interesting relics from the past that were once thought to be extinct. Somewhere between our somewhat reactive approach (which has been successful) and the very front-ended Swiss approach is likely to be a spot where we could gain some ground in conservation with a reasonable expenditure of resources. I think a few regions are very likely to yield good results. The following list describes these “conservation hotspots” in further detail.

The Aleutian Islands and other Alaskan sites are one likely hotspot area. This may seem odd at first, but their long isolation and the Russian foundation of some of these populations make the Aleutians a prime target for old, isolated pockets of animals that are distantly related to those in the rest of the United States. Some of these are likely to be farmer-owned (chickens), while others might be feral but with a



Any additions to lines of Guinea Hogs would be especially important, because this breed is fairly genetically divergent from other breeds. Photo by ALBC staff.

unique and important foundation (cattle). Discovering breeds in the Aleutian Islands and Alaska would be a huge undertaking, but the massive genetic erosion of Russian livestock under Soviet collectives would make any remnants important indeed. This work would get complicated quite rapidly, because the color array of Russian cattle mimics that of Western Europe, despite their long isolation. This would make superficial inspection somewhat less useful than careful DNA analysis – which is challenging in feral populations. Fortunately such work has already started with feral cattle on Chirikof Island.

The Deep South remains another prime target for ALBC. The organization has done a decent job of locating most of the Pineywoods cattle as well as Tacky horses (Pine and Marsh). However, there are likely some old sheep flocks that have been missed, and organizing the ones we do know about is no small undertaking. Old local goats are also likely to be

encountered, but exactly where and how to go about finding them is still a challenge to surmount. Any additions to lines of Guinea Hogs would be especially important, because this breed is fairly genetically divergent from other breeds and has such low numbers that genetic management becomes difficult. Overlooked strains of turkeys and geese (Cotton Patch) are also likely to surface, and how we define these becomes an important driver to the process of finding and documenting them. Islands off the southern Atlantic coast have already proven to be refuges for strains of some of the breeds already on our list, and are likely to hold other treasures yet to be discovered.

New England can similarly hold pleasant surprises. The Randall Lineback and Milking Devon cattle are examples of ALBC success in this region. While there may be few new surprises, any additional remnant herds of old landrace Lineback

continued on next page

2003

Results of turkey census are published. With ALBC's help, the number of heritage turkey breeding birds increases 230% from 1997.



2005

Rabbits officially added to the *Conservation Priority List*. First Heritage definition released (for turkeys).



Conservation Hotspots

Continued from previous page

cattle would certainly be important to save. The islands off the Maine coast hold special interest and could easily have feral remnants of populations of a number of species.

The Southwest is also likely to hold overlooked treasures, especially in Native American and Hispanic communities; however, accessing these isolated regions can be a challenge. There are rumors and photos of old Iberian types of horses, goats, and other livestock among the Navajos, and I would be surprised if that were the only place they exist.

Amish communities throughout the United States may also hold some overlooked resources, especially for poultry species.

If the list were organized by species instead of geography, it might look somewhat different:

Horses – It is unlikely for many new or different populations to turn up, though a few pockets of Colonial Spanish horses could have potentially been overlooked through the years.

Cattle – Isolated New England herds and Aleutian herds, are most likely to be the source of new cattle breeds. Anything from the Deep South would fit into Pineywoods or Florida Cracker breeds, and could be important additions to those breeds. Hawaii could be a source of some feral strains, although those strains are likely quite rare by now.

Donkeys – It is unlikely that ALBC has overlooked anything, unless we greatly expand our remit to include isolated pockets of feral animals. These tend to lack the phenotypic distinctiveness that we usually use to help define a breed.

Goats – Overlooked pockets of Spanish



The recently-discovered Mottled Javas have added an important and vigorous strain to the Java conservation effort. Photo by ALBC staff.

goats are likely to still be out there, and the ones from the Southeast are especially important due to their adaptation to a warm, humid environment.

Pigs – Feral swine abound, but documenting the genetic uniqueness of different populations is a huge hurdle to overcome. Choctaw hogs from Southeast Oklahoma are likely to be encountered. Any newly discovered Guinea Hog populations would be a very important find.

Sheep – Although finding something completely new is unlikely, newly encountered strains of Florida and Gulf Coast sheep are possible. Feral sheep from the coast of Maine are rumored, and could be a significant find.

Chickens – These are likely to show up in almost any geographic region. The most likely places to have old, genetically divergent remnants are Aleutians, Deep South, New England, and Amish communities. Long-isolated flocks of breeds that are otherwise already documented could also be important, such as the recently discovered Mottled Javas that have added an important and vigorous strain to the

Java conservation effort.

Turkeys – These could also turn up anywhere. Anything from the Pueblos would be a dramatic and important find. This could also be true of northern Mexico.

Geese – The Deep South may hold new strains of the Cotton Patch geese. Other farm geese may also turn

up, but how to frame this and decide what is a breed becomes an important question.

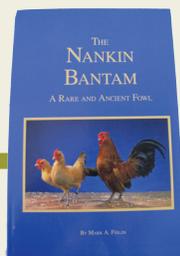
How to go about identifying these animals is tricky, and time is of the essence as these treasures are likely to be in the hands of very elderly breeders and stewards who may not have a succession plan for their animals in place. While these “conservation hotspots” are not the only potential areas to discover new genetics, they do offer us a good place to start looking. Cooperation from the people who are raising these animals is just as important as locating the breeds. By identifying genetically significant populations of animals and developing well thought-out breeding plans, we can ensure that the genetics of these rare breeds are preserved and that future generations will continue for years to come. ❖

Phil Sponenberg, DVM, Ph.D. is a Professor of Pathology and Genetics at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia. He is a long-time member of ALBC and serves as a Technical Advisor to the ALBC staff. He can be reached via email at dpsponen@vt.edu.



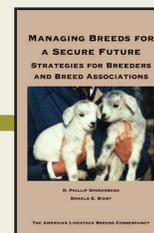
2006

ALBC publishes *The Nankin Bantam* and began work on the Buckeye Recovery Project.



2007

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Breed Association Contact Changes

American Highland Cattle Association

The American Highland Cattle Association has relocated its headquarters to Historic City Hall, 22 S. 4th Ave., Ste. 201, Brighton, CO 80601-2030, Phone: (303) 659-2399, Fax: (303) 659-2241

Red Wattle Hog Association

The Red Wattle Hog Association has a new address and phone number: 41 Jones Road, Horse Cave, KY 42749, Phone: 270-565-3815, redwattlehogs@hotmail.com.

The new contact (secretary) is Kathy Bottorff.

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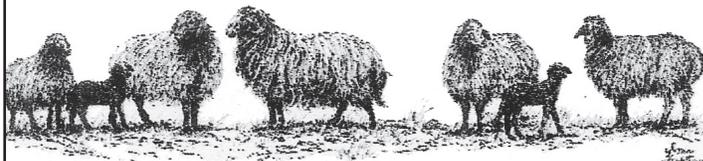
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Registrar Deborah Siegrist
636-332-9346
gsiegrist2@centurytel.net

www.thelippittmorganhorseregistry.org
www.thelippittmorganhorseregistry.com

2010

First full-color *ALBC News* published.
Member logo created.



2011

New membership levels released....\$35 for basic membership. *Breeders and Products Directory* goes online.



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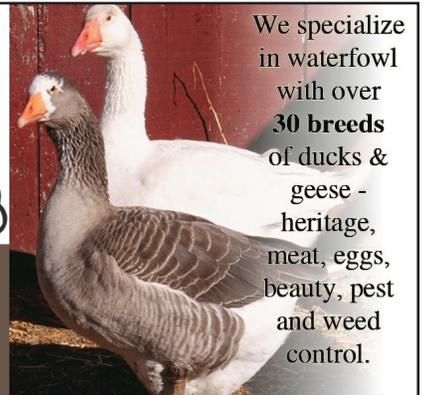
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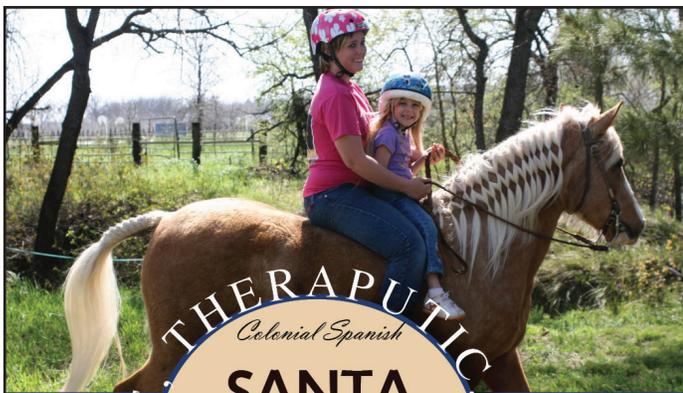
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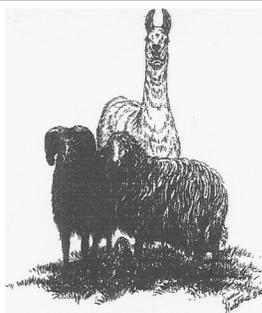
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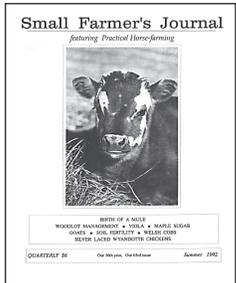


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See the ALBC website for a more extensive list of events. ALBC encourages event organizers to submit events related to conservation, farming, sustainability, rare breeds, and more to the ALBC Calendar. Send your submission to editor@albc-usa.org or mail to PO Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

January

January 18-21 – The 21st Annual Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference will be held in Little Rock, AR. This conference is for serious organic and sustainable producers or those interested in creating more vibrant community food systems. The event offers informative pre-conference courses and field trips, eight tracks of practical conference sessions, networking gatherings, trade show, Taste of Arkansas dinner, and more. For more information, call (404) 797-0496, email media@ssawg.org, or visit www.ssawg.org.

January 19-21 – The Organic Seed Growers Conference, “Strengthening Community Seed Systems,” will be held at Fort Worden State Park and Conference Center in Port Townsend, WA. Join farmers, seed production and distribution companies, researchers, plant breeders, pathologists, and university extension in

two days of informative sessions, panel discussions, and networking events. Visit www.seedalliance.org or email Cathleen@seedalliance.org for more information.

February

February 1-4 – The 32nd Annual Eco Farm Conference “Raising Eco Farmers’ Voices” will be held at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, CA. Join attendees for a variety of different sessions on topics like Holistic Herd Health, Organic Winemaking, and Organic Agriculture as a Strategic Tool for Global Change. Register at www.eco-farm.org or call (831) 655-9924 for more information.

February 14-16 – The 2012 World Ag Expo will take place in Tulare, CA. An estimated 100,000 attendees from 72 countries will attend the largest agricultural show of its kind with 1,500 exhibitors displaying cutting-edge agricultural technology and equipment on 2.6 million square feet of show grounds. For more information, call (800) 999-9186 or visit www.worldagexpo.com.

February 18-19 – The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association 33rd Annual Conference: “Sowing the Seeds of Our Food Sovereignty” will be held in Granville, OH. Keynote speakers include Woody Tasch, founder and chairman of the Slow Money Alliance, and Andrew Kimbrell, public interest attorney, activist, author, and executive director of the Center for Food Safety. Visit www.oeffa.org or call (614) 421-2022 for more details.

March

March 3 – The Annual Meeting of the Heartland Highland Cattle Association will be held in Branson, MO. Everyone is welcome. The focus of the meeting will be marketing techniques for Highland cattle and beef. For more information call (417) 345-0575, email heartlandhighlandcattle@gmail.com, or visit www.heartlandhighlandcattleassociation.org.

March 3-4 – The 19th Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference will be held at the University of North Carolina – Asheville. This event brings producers and consumers together to celebrate food and community, to teach, and to learn. Contact Meredith McKissick at (828) 582-5039 or Meredith@organicgrowersschool.org for more information.

March 14-15 – The Midwest Poultry Federation Convention will take place at the Saint Paul River Centre in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Visit the largest regional poultry show in the U.S. while visiting the exhibit hall and the Welcome Reception to network with attendees and exhibitors. Visit www.midwestpoultry.com or call (763) 682-2171 for more information.



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