

John J. Di Leonardo

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SUMMARY

Anthrozoologist and nationally recognized animal-protection strategist with 15+ years of leadership experience in advocacy, investigations, rescue, legislative policy, and nonprofit management. Proven record of influencing local, state, and corporate policy; leading high-impact campaigns; securing major enforcement actions; and operating large-scale rescue and sanctuary operations. Frequent national speaker, published columnist, and media spokesperson featured in 1,000+ news stories.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Anthrozoology & Animal Welfare Science
 - Strategic Campaign Development
 - Legislative Advocacy & Policy Reform
 - High-Profile Investigations
 - Humane Education & Public Speaking
 - Media Relations & Crisis Communications
 - Animal Rescue, Rehabilitation & Sanctuary Management
 - Grassroots Mobilization & Coalition Leadership
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Humane Long Island

Founder, President & Executive Director (2012-Present)

Founded and leads a regional powerhouse nonprofit driving policy change, investigations, rescue operations, and humane education throughout NY and across North America.

Selected Impact & Achievements

Major Legislative & Policy Victories

- Barred the opening or operation of live-slaughter markets, exotic animal exhibitors, bull-riding events, roadside zoos, aquariums, and unlawfully operated reptile expos.
- Secured bans or restrictions on traveling exotic animal acts in New York City, Suffolk County, Brookhaven, and fairs in Bellmore, Northport, and Levittown.
- Led the campaign prompting Brookhaven Town Board's unanimous vote to close the Holtsville Ecology Site, a roadside zoo operated by the Highway Department.
- Prevented Jamaica Live Poultry's expansion into Islip, stopping a new live-slaughter facility.
- Convinced officials in Brookhaven and Riverhead to deny permits for bull-riding events.
- Defeated efforts to cut Babylon's fowl-keeping setbacks and ended the decades-long waterfowl abandonment tradition at East Hampton Nature Trail.
- Rescinded lethal wildlife-control plans across a dozen municipalities, sparing thousands of geese and deer and securing commitments to humane management.

Investigations & Enforcement

Spearheaded investigations resulting in:

- Criminal convictions, arrests, and fines for slaughterhouse operators, wildlife traffickers, illegal exhibitors, and poultry stores.
- Confiscation of hundreds of wild, exotic, and farmed animals across NY by the NYPD, DEC, DOH, and District Attorneys.
- Closure of backyard butcher operations, unlicensed slaughterhouses, and unlawfully operated menageries.
- Dozens of federal AWA violations, contempt citations, permit revocations, and the eventual court-ordered closure of Sloth Encounters.

Campaign Leadership

- Drove campaigns that halted a proposed \$5M "interactive aquarium" by SeaQuest in Oyster Bay and helped shutter Cole Bros. Circus, historically an Endangered Species Act violator.

- Persuaded equestrian centers, school districts, and municipalities to cancel exotic-animal displays and end hatching projects.
- Collaborated with Party Pets of New York to facilitate the compassionate closure of its petting zoo and ensure every animal was safely retired to reputable sanctuaries.
- Installed more than a dozen public-education billboards, generating an estimated **14.5+ million impressions**.

Rescue, Rehabilitation & Sanctuary Operations

- Rescued **thousands** of farmed, exotic, and wild animals from slaughter, trafficking, and neglect.
- Operates a transitional sanctuary serving **hundreds of animals annually**.
- Oversees **Duck Defenders**, an international program responding to waterfowl abandonment and cruelty in a dozen states and provinces.
- Maintains a 24/7 regional emergency hotline; operates a specialized rescue vehicle with net-launchers and watercraft.
- Partnered with authorities to confiscate hundreds of farmed and exotic animals from unlicensed exhibitors, slaughterhouses, and hoarding situations
- Facilitated the rescue of dozens of animals from New York City live-slaughter markets in exchange for plant-based meals

Grants, Partnerships & Community Support

- Distributed **tens of thousands of dollars** in grants and in-kind support to sanctuaries nationwide (pond construction, equipment, feed, and more).
- Donated more than **25,000 lbs.** of plant-based meals to community members experiencing food insecurity and wholesome food to companion animals in rescues and shelters.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

Multiple Leadership Roles, Animals in Entertainment Campaign & Grassroots Campaigns (2015–2021)

Progressed from Campaigner to Senior Manager, overseeing high-impact national and international campaigns.

Key Achievements

- Co-directed campaign strategy with the Executive Vice President (now President), placing Animals in Entertainment at the forefront of national discourse.
 - Led the team that helped drive seismic industry shifts including the **closure of Ringling Bros. Circus**, SeaWorld ending orca breeding and circus-style dolphin shows, and the Iditarod slashing prize money by half a million dollars.
 - Established PETA's **Grassroots Campaigns division**, overseeing national activist mobilization programs that contributed to industry-shifting victories such as Canada Goose dropping fur and ExxonMobil ending a quarter-million-dollar Iditarod sponsorship.
 - Conducted and managed high-profile rescues, including:
 - Securing the release of pigs from the Iowa Pork Association VP and Mogler Farms CEO in memory of activist Regan Russell
 - Rescuing 16 infant roosters mailed as a prank to Barstool Sports
 - Securing the surrender of five chickens from NYC live-slaughter markets in memory of activist Shimon Shuchat
 - Media spokesperson and registered lobbyist, leading national demonstrations and communicating with major and adversarial outlets.
 - Served as liaison to high-profile whistleblowers, including prominent SeaWorld and Iditarod insiders.
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Innovative Resources for Independence (IRI)

Manager & Specialist Roles (2010–2015)

Managed multiple day-habilitation programs for neurologically diverse individuals.

Notable Contributions

- Oversaw three programs serving 40+ high-support-needs clients and a multi-tiered staff.
- Introduced humane-education partnerships and replaced exploitive field trips with welfare-centered, skill-building programming.
- Advocated internally for elimination of animal-use activities across the agency.

- Earned **Employee of the Month** for exceptional service.
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EDUCATION

M.S., Anthrozoology, Canisius University – 4.0 GPA

Graduate Certificate, International School for Jain Studies, Pune, India

Completed Coursework, Humane Society University – 4.0 GPA

B.A., Psychology (Minor in Religious Studies), Siena College – Psi Chi Honor Society

CHARITABLE & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

National Goose Protection Coalition (Steering Committee), Shanti Fund (Column Manager), Lake Ronkonkoma Geese Mitigation Program (Coordinator), PETA Action & Emergency Response Teams (Volunteer), HSUS District Leader, and additional leadership, volunteer, and educational roles across 20+ organizations.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (SELECTED)

Delivered 50+ guest lectures and keynote presentations, including at:

- **National Recreation & Park Association Conference, Orlando (2025)**
 - **Thomas Jefferson University, Columbia Law School, Hofstra University, LIU Veterinary College, Touro Law Center, NYU Law School, BOCES Barry Tech**
 - **PAWS International Captive Wildlife Conference, Los Angeles (2014, 2024)**
 - **NYC Bar Association; Suffolk County Bar Association**
 - **Anuvibha ICPNA, Mumbai (2024)**
 - **National Animal Rights Day; Animal Liberation March; Jain Jagruti Centre**
Full list available upon request.
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HONORS & AWARDS (SELECTED)

RISE Life Services' Honoree (2024) • PETA Outstanding Activist Award (2022–24) • Gandhi Award (2022) • Golden Goose Award (2022) • PETA Hero for Coyotes (Canada Goose's Fur

Free Policy, 2021) • NY State Humane Association Spotlight (2020) • NYC Mayoral Pen (Foie Gras Ban, 2019) • HSUS Advocates We Love (2014) • PETA Bronze Elephant (Ending Ringling's Cruelty, 2017) • Numerous local and national awards for activism, leadership, and humane education.

CERTIFICATIONS (CURRENT & PAST)

- NYS Class I Wildlife Rehabilitator
 - Suffolk County Geese Management Certification
 - Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - SCIP-R & CPR/First Aid
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PUBLICATIONS & OP-EDS

Author of a weekly ethics column in *The South Asian Times* and dozens of op-eds in national outlets including the **Chicago Tribune, Newsday, Orlando Sentinel, Daily News, One Green Planet, Young Jains (UK), Sramana (India)**, and many others. Topics include waterfowl abandonment, exotic-animal welfare, circus cruelty, wildlife policy, and ethical veganism.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Published more than 50 letters across major papers including **New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Newsday, New York Daily News**, and many others.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Profiled by *Newsday, New York Post, Long Island Herald, Long Island Press, Dan's Papers*, and *Long Island Pulse*.

Featured or quoted in more than **1,000 media stories**, including *AP, Reuters, National Geographic, Guardian, People, New York Times*, and *Washington Post*.

Televised on ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, A&E's *Rescue Cam*, Inside Edition, PIX11, News12, NDTV

Radio features on NPR, WCBS 880, 1010 WINS, WBAB, BLI, and dozens more.