



ranging widely across ecosystems than to see miserable captive elephants standing around in a bare enclosure, no matter how 'naturalistic' the landscaping design may be."

In 1991, Dale Marcellini, a curator at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., conducted a study of zoo visitors that showed that zoos are little more than backdrops for people's other preoccupations. Visitors spent less than eight seconds per snake



and only one minute with the lions. Pere David's deer, expected to become extinct when the last captive deer dies, rated a mere 27 seconds. Marcellini concluded that "people ... treat[ed] the exhibits like wallpaper."



Beyond Zoos

Instead of supporting zoos, we should support groups that work to preserve habitats and reputable nonprofit sanctuaries that rescue and care for animals but don't sell, breed, or exhibit them. Zoos can best help animals by providing greater space to fewer animals and becoming sanctuaries for needy animals who must be rescued from abusive situations.

Please, never patronize zoos.

PETA.org

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ZOOS: CAGED CRUELTY

Zoos range in size and quality from cageless parks to small roadside menageries with concrete slabs and iron bars. While many well-known zoos are taking steps to provide token enrichment for animals, the artificial enclosures still cannot compare to natural habitats.

Zoos often prevent animals from engaging in basic innate behaviors such as flying, swimming, running, hunting, climbing, scavenging, and selecting a mate. The restrictions of captivity cause physical and mental frustration that often lead to neurotic behaviors, such as pacing, bar-biting, and self-mutilation.

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Stress and Stereotypic Behavior

A 2003 study conducted by zoologists at Oxford University indicated that polar bears, tigers, and other large predators who roam hundreds of miles in the wild show "stereotypic" (neurotic) symptoms of stress and have high rates of infant mortality when kept in zoos or safari parks.

These animals spend much of their waking hours pacing because they are unable to satisfy their instincts to roam and hunt. The typical enclosure for a polar bear, for example, is one-millionth the size of a polar bear's home range in the wild. Because of this staggering difference, captive polar bears spend approximately 25 percent of their day pacing.

A PETA investigation of numerous zoos across the country found several species of bears exhibiting stereotypic behavior. These frustrated animals were observed pacing, walking in tight circles, and swaying or rolling their heads.



Pachyderms in Peril

Elephants, too, fare especially poorly in zoos. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has not even required zoos to abandon the barbaric use of bullhooks and actually provides guidelines for striking elephants. The AZA also does not prohibit zoos from chaining elephants every single night and sets outdoor space requirements at about the size of a three-car garage.



According to David Hancocks, the former director of Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, elephants "are actually very poor candidates for life in captivity. . . . Their requirements are so substantial—it is probably beyond the capabilities of most zoos to even begin to resolve them."

Because of this, 14 U.S. zoos have closed, or announced plans to close, their elephant exhibits. Detroit Zoological Institute Director Ron Kagan acknowledged, "We now more fully understand an elephant's needs. Just as polar bears don't thrive in hot climates, Asian elephants shouldn't live in small groups without many acres to roam. They clearly shouldn't have to suffer winters of the North."



Conservation Con

Most animals in zoos are not endangered, and most zoos do little to protect wild populations. Zoos breed animals simply to provide cute babies to attract zoo patrons, which creates a surplus of unwanted, older animals, who may be transferred to roadside zoos, circuses, or exotic animal dealers or sent to auctions for sale to the "pet" trade or canned hunts, in which hunters pay for the "privilege" of killing them at point-blank range. Returning captive-bred animals to the wild is not practical or feasible since these animals have been denied the opportunity to learn survival skills.

What's more, nearly all elephants in zoos were captured from the wild, tearing families apart and posing a threat to already dwindling populations. As recently as 2003, U.S. zoos were capturing wild African elephants for a miserable life of captivity.



Exploitation, Not Education

Zoos claim to educate people, but they are teaching the wrong lesson—that it is acceptable to tear animals away from their families and homes and put them on display for our amusement. Most zoo visitors usually spend only a few minutes or seconds at each display, seeking entertainment rather than enlightenment.

Keith Lindsay with the Amboseli Elephant Research Project in Kenya believes that zoos have "next to nothing to offer" with regard to education. He feels, "It is much better to watch films of real elephants behaving naturally—walking, feeding, playing, mating, fighting—in truly natural social groups of up to hundreds of animals