

Animals being held in captivity sociology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Wild animals are called “ wild” animals for a reason. If wild animals were meant to be kept locked up in a prison, also known as a zoo, then what’s the point of calling them wild animals anymore? Zoo officials use many arguments to support their position that holding wild animals in captivity is necessary, but those arguments are neither ethical nor necessary enough reasons to deprive animals of their natural right to freedom. Even under the best of circumstances at the best of zoos, captivity cannot even begin to measure up to wild animals’ natural habitats. At zoos, animals are often prevented from doing most of the things that are natural and important to them. Zoos teach people that it is acceptable to interfere with animals and keep them locked up in captivity, where they are bored, cramped, lonely, deprived of all control over their lives, and far from their natural homes. Wild animals were made to be free, and free is what they should be.

One of the main arguments that zoos use for keeping animals held in captivity is the claim that zoos are needed for educational purposes. Although this may seem like a legitimate argument, it is not an ethical enough reason to deprive wild animals of their freedom. “ Besides, to gain true and complete knowledge of wild animals, one must observe them in their natural habitats.” (Thoreau) “ The conditions under which animals are kept in zoos typically distort their behavior significantly.” (Thoreau) Simply looking at an animal behind glass or behind bars under the conditions in which they are in is not necessarily educating. The majority of people who go to zoos are not going for educational purposes anyway; they are going simply for entertainment. “ Over the course of five summers, a curator at the National Zoo followed more than 700 zoo visitors and found that “ it didn’t

matter what was on display ... people were treating the exhibits like wallpaper.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ Most zoo enclosures are very small, and rather than promoting respect for or understanding of animals, signs often provide little more information than an animal’s species, diet, and natural range.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ Animals’ normal behavior is seldom discussed, much less observed, because their natural needs are rarely met.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons)

Another common argument that zoos often use to justify keeping wild animals in captivity is the claim that they are trying to protect species from extinction. “ This may sound like a noble goal, but zoo officials usually favor exotic or popular animals-who draw crowds and publicity-rather than threatened or endangered local wildlife.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ The Chinese government, for example, “ rents” pandas to zoos worldwide for fees of more than \$1 million per year, but some question whether the profits are being directed toward panda-conservation efforts at all.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ Most animals housed in zoos are not endangered, and those who are will likely never be released into natural habitats.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ Choosing zoos as a means for species preservation, in addition to being expensive and of doubtful effectiveness, has serious ethical problems.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Keeping animals in zoos harms them by denying them freedom of movement and association, which is important to social animals, and frustrates many of their natural behavioral patterns, leaving them at least bored, and at worst seriously neurotic.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ While humans may feel there is some justifying benefit to their captivity (that the species is being preserved, and may someday be

reintroduced into the wild), this is no compensating benefit to the individual animals.” (Animals for Entertainment)

“ Zoos argue that they can maintain certain species in captivity until the cause of the creature’s extirpation is remedied, and then successfully reintroduce the animals to the wild, resulting in a healthy, self-sustaining population.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ The whole concept of habitat restoration is mired in serious difficulties.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Animals threatened by poaching (elephants, rhinos, pandas, bears and more) will never be safe in the wild as long as firearms, material needs, and a willingness to consume animal parts coincide.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Species threatened by chemical contamination (such as bird species vulnerable to pesticides and lead shot) will not be candidates for release until we stop using the offending substances, and enough time has passed for the toxins to be processed out of the environment.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Since heavy metals and some pesticides are both persistent and bio accumulative, this could mean decades or centuries before it is safe to reintroduce the animals.” (Animals for Entertainment)

“ Even if these problems can be overcome, there are still difficulties with the process of reintroduction.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Problems such as human imprinting, the need to teach animals to fly, hunt, build dens, and raise their young are serious obstacles, and must be solved individually for each species.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ There is a small limit to the number of species the global network of zoos can preserve under even the most optimistic assumptions.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Profound constraints are imposed by the lack of space in zoos, their limited financial
<https://assignbuster.com/animals-being-held-in-captivity-sociology-essay/>

resources, and the requirement that viable gene pools of each species be preserved.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Few zoos, for instance, ever keep more than two individuals of large mammal species.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ The need to preserve scores or hundreds of a particular species would be beyond the resources of even the largest zoos, and even the whole world zoo community would be hard-pressed to preserve even a few dozen species in this manner.” (Animals For Entertainment)

“ Zoos are not only bad for the animals they incarcerate, but there is also a risk to zoo visitors and staff.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Zoonoses – the transmission of diseases between animals and humans – is a growing concern worldwide.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) Captive animal facilities such as zoos can play a major role in the spread of zoonotic diseases (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives). “ Capture from the wild, handling, transportation and captivity all cause increased stress in animals, which can damage their immune system and make them more susceptible to disease.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ In 2005, six children received hospital treatment for a stomach bug after visiting a Scottish zoo.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ It is thought that contact with animals led to 24 reported cases of cryptosporidium.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ At the same time more than two-dozen people were hit with a kidney infection after visiting a petting zoo in the USA.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ British zoos have been implicated in outbreaks of the dangerous e-coli intestinal infection, with people being hospitalized.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Although visitors and staff are more likely to be at risk through direct contact with animals or their feces, many of the illnesses are

airborne and can be carried around on clothes, shoes, hair, etc.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives)

Disease isn't the only risk that people face when visiting zoos. There have been many cases where wild animals in zoos have escaped and attacked visitors and staff. “ The San Francisco Zoo was closed to visitors on December 26, 2007, as police investigated a tiger attack they say may have been provoked by visitors' taunting the animal, leaving one man dead and two brothers injured.” (San Francisco Tiger Attack) “ One witness said at least one of the victims had provoked the tiger, which had been out of its cage an estimated 15 to 20 minutes, police said.” (San Francisco Tiger Attack) “ The same tiger also ripped the flesh off a zookeeper's arm just before Christmas 2006.” (San Francisco Tiger Attack) If it wasn't clear enough before, we must learn again: Wild animals are wild and capable, at any time, of aggressive, even fatal attacks. Mark Bekoff, a former professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, had this to say about wild animals in zoos, “ These animals are bored. They're smart, they're agile, they're emotional and they're working 24/7 to get out of their prison because that's what they're in: a prison cell.” (They're Natural Born Killers)

As zoo animals grow older and become less “ cute” in the eyes of the visitors, the elderly animals are carelessly discarded by zoo officials and often handed over to the wrong hands. In some cases, unwanted animals are found neglected and abandoned. According to a 2003 article from U. S. News & World Report, “ two rare white-handed gibbons, small apes listed as an endangered species, were discovered in New Braunfels, Texas by a reporter

<https://assignbuster.com/animals-being-held-in-captivity-sociology-essay/>

one broiling day in a filthy cage with no water and a few scraps of rotten fruit.” (Satchell) “ Their plight points to a little-known practice by some of the nation’s premier zoos: dumping surplus, old, or infirm animals into a vast, poorly regulated—and often highly profitable—network of substandard, “ roadside” zoos and wildlife dealers who supply hunting ranches and the exotic-pet trade.” (Satchell) “ A chimpanzee named Edith is another example of a discarded zoo baby who fell into the wrong hands.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ Born in the 1960s at the Saint Louis Zoo, Edith was surely a big draw for visitors. But just after her third birthday, she was taken from her family and passed around to at least five different facilities, finally landing at a Texas roadside zoo called the Amarillo Wildlife Refuge (AWR).” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ During an undercover investigation of AWR, PETA found Edith in a filthy, barren concrete pit. She was hairless and had been living on rotten produce and dog food.” (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) “ In many cases, zoo animals are bred simply to attract visitors, and pressure on space and resources means that some will be disposed of or even killed at the end of the season.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives)

Keeping animals held captive in zoos can have many negative effects on an animal’s body, both mentally and physically. “ In the wild, animals react to their surroundings, avoiding predators, seeking food and interacting with others of their species – doing what they were made to do.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Consequently, even what might seem ‘ larger’ or ‘ better’ enclosures may be completely impoverished in terms of the animals’ real needs.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Frustration and boredom are commonplace amongst animals in zoos and can lead to obsessive and

repetitive behaviors in the form of pacing, swaying, and even self-mutilation.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ This is known as stereotypic behavior and such pointless, repetitive movements have also been noted in people with mental illnesses.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ With nothing to do, animals in zoos go out of their minds.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Even diets are unnatural, with zebras in zoos becoming overweight as the grass they are given is higher in calories than the grasses of the African savannah.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ The resulting obesity can affect fertility.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives) “ Some animals suffer such serious behavioral problems in zoos that they are given anti-depressants, tranquilizers and anti-psychotic drugs to control their behaviors.” (Sad Eyes & Empty Lives)

“ Zoo officials often argue that animals live longer in zoos than they would in the wild.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ In some cases, this is true, but it is irrelevant.” (Animals for Entertainment) “ Researchers compared the life spans of elephants in European zoos with those living in Amboseli National Park in Kenya and others working on a timber enterprise in Myanmar.” (Schmid) “ Animals in the wild or in natural working conditions had life spans twice that or more of their relatives in zoos.” (Schmid) Some animals may live longer in captivity than they would in the wild, but length of life doesn’t make up for the unethical conditions in which they are kept. “ A tradeoff of quantity of life versus quality of life is not always decided in favor of quantity.” (Animals for Entertainment)

There are many other, more ethical ways to view wild animals and to learn about them without having to look at them behind bars. “ With informative <https://assignbuster.com/animals-being-held-in-captivity-sociology-essay/>

television programming, educational opportunities on the internet, and the relative ease of international travel, learning about or viewing animals in their natural habitats can be as simple as a flick of a switch or a hike up a mountain." (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons) " The idea of keeping animals confined behind cage bars is obsolete." (Zoos: Pitiful Prisons)