

Candidate D evidence

(Discursive)

Why Zoos Should be Endangered

For most families, days out to the zoo are an amazing experience, where they can get up close to animals large and small from far-flung places that they may have only seen in picture books or on TV. However, the reality is not always pretty or cute due to large groups of noisy people gawking at the animals and even harassing them as the animals pace up and down their cages in boredom or frustration or sitting in a corner, lonely and depressed. They may chuck food at them or knock on the glass of their enclosure, increasingly disturbing and distressing these animals. Even those animals that look like they're having fun - the monkeys and penguins - would be much more exciting to see swinging in the jungle, rather than in a cage, or hunting on the ice caps instead of being thrown fish at feeding time. Although it is a commonly held belief that animals do not belong in zoos, we need to look at things from another point of view. If we look at how animals are being endangered, whether by hunting or by reduction of their natural habitat, we can see how zoos can be beneficial to them, serving as a place of safety.

There are many arguments as to why zoos should be banned. Insufficient space is one of the best reasons to support this. No matter how large zoos try to make their enclosures, it will never be able to simulate the space that is required for some of the animals. This lack of space is particularly an issue for animals that travel large distances. According to numerous studies, elephants, which typically travel 30 miles a day, are held captive in places that are on average a thousand times smaller. As a result of this confinement, many of the animals suffer from stress, boredom and depression. This is particularly clear in the case of the penguins at Scarborough Sea Life Centre many of whom are on anti-depressants due to anxiety and stress. This is due to the fact that they're being kept in captivity in a zoo, thousands of miles from where they belong. In the last decade, zoos across the nation have turned increasingly to antidepressants, tranquilizers, and even antipsychotic drugs to ease behavioural problems within enclosures. On top of this, animals are no longer able to survive in their natural habitat due to the fact that animals born into zoos do not learn how to hunt or master necessary skills that are essential to survive in the wild. In addition, removing individuals from the wild further endangers the wild population because the remaining individuals will be less genetically diverse and will have more difficulty finding mates.

Zoos are also morally wrong. We simply do not have the right to capture, confine and breed other animals. Baby animals bring in visitors and money, but this incentive to breed new baby animals leads to overcrowded cages. Surplus animals are sold not only to other zoos, but also to circuses, canned hunting facilities, and even for slaughter. In addition, some zoos just kill their surplus animals outright. The vast majority of captive breeding programs do not release animals back into the wild. The offspring are forever part of the chain of zoos, circuses, petting zoos, and exotic pet

trade that buy, sell and barter animals among themselves and exploit the animals. The zoos they live in can also have atrocious living conditions and animals have sometimes escaped their enclosures, endangering themselves as well as people. This was made abundantly clear at the Virginia zoo where 10 prairie dogs died when their tunnel collapsed, a rhinoceros drowned in the moat of her exhibit, and a zebra narrowly escaped death after jumping into the lion exhibit, while another lost her life when she bolted from a holding pen, struck a fence, and broke her neck. These examples show that often zoos are unable to replicate the normal living conditions that wildlife survive in and they occasionally don't provide safe or secure shelter for these animals.

On the other hand, there are many arguments for keeping zoos the way they are. Zoos have improved significantly in the last 25 or so years. Gone are the old steel-bar enclosures and cold cement cages. Most zoos these days use natural-looking barriers like moats or ditches to separate animals from people, and have mini-habitats that resemble the animals' natural environment. Zoos save endangered species by bringing the animals into a safe environment, where they are protected from poachers, habitat loss, starvation and predators. In 2016, there were 39 animal species listed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as extinct in the wild and these species would have vanished totally were it not for captive populations around the world, many of which reside in zoos. Furthermore, many zoos also have breeding programs for endangered species. In the wild, these individuals might have trouble finding mates and breeding. Successful breeding programs brought the Pere David's deer back from extinction. Though this Asian deer ceased to exist in the wild, Chinese and European zoo programs enabled four of the deer to be released back into the wild in 1985, where they're now self-sustaining. A good zoo provides an enriched habitat in which the animals are never bored, are well cared for, and have plenty of space. This means that by bringing people and animals together, zoos educate the public and foster an appreciation of the animals. This exposure and education motivates people to protect the animals.

Finally, zoos are vital for research. Being able to observe and study animals is crucial if we want to contribute to help them and repair the ecosystems. They also help reduce human-animal conflicts and better understand the needs and psychology of animals. Zoos serve as laboratories to learn more about how to fight animal diseases and develop effective animal anaesthetics and other treatments to help more animals in the future.

In conclusion, it is clear to see that there are both positives and negatives for retaining zoos. A zoo is a place where animals live in captivity and are put on display for people to view. From an animal rights standpoint, we do not have the right to breed, capture and confine other animals. On the other hand, the conditions the zoos provide for the animals to live in have greatly improved over time and they can help to rehabilitate wild life populations. However, I believe zoos should only contain wild animals on the endangered list as their amounts are rapidly diminishing. This is because it would be safer for the animals and they would not become extinct as they would be provided

with food, shelter and medicine and their breeding would be monitored and controlled. Alongside these arguments in favor of zoos from an animal perspective, humans too can benefit enormously from spending time within the confines of the zoological gardens. A day out at the zoo can provide the perfect opportunity for parents to teach children about respectful behavior towards others, while at the same time giving them acres of space to run wild and free as memories are captured for a lifetime.

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