

# **Resolved: "In the United States, the keeping of animals in zoos should be banned."**

## **Neg: The Collective Impact of America's Zoos and Aquariums**

### ***American Association of Zoos & Aquariums***

Each day millions of visitors enjoy their local zoos and aquariums. Most don't realize that their hometown zoo or aquarium is part of a powerful, caring industry with enormous collective impact.

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums draw more than 143 million visitors each year - more attendance than the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball combined.

Many visitors become members of their local zoo or aquarium - 3.6 million households representing 9.4 million Individuals are zoo or aquarium members, their membership dues providing more than \$100 million in financial support.

Annually, more than 72,000 volunteers invest over four and a half million hours of their time, supporting virtually every aspect of zoo and aquarium operations.

With their incomparable commitment to conservation education in living classrooms, zoos and aquariums reach almost 45 million people each year and dedicate \$83 million annually to education programs.

Teachers are educated as well. Annually, 48,000 teachers attend formal training workshops.

Virtually every group imaginable is reached through zoo and aquarium education programs for families, seniors, teens, pre-schoolers and special-needs audiences.

Zoos and aquariums are dedicated to the highest standards of animal care. On any given day, more than 700,000 animals are cared for, with many of those being the last representatives of an endangered species.

Many endangered species survive because of zoos and aquariums. The AZA's Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program - a long-term breeding and conservation plan - provides species with an insurance policy against extinction. There are currently 110 Species Survival Plans, covering different 149 species.

Effective wildlife conservation is rooted in science. Almost 14,000 employees are engaged in conservation and science research in zoos and aquariums, supported by 3,400 volunteers.

Zoos and aquariums take conservation action all over the world. In 2005, 166 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums reported participating in 1,719 conservation, research, and education projects in 97 countries or regions. Collectively, zoos and aquariums spent \$237 million on conservation and research.

Zoos and aquariums are powerful tourism generators for their communities. They enhance their local economies each year by attracting 143 million visitors, employing 33,300 workers, investing over \$1.6 billion in operating budgets.

Each year, zoos and aquariums change and improve. In 2005, they invested \$143 million on improvements that make better experiences for visitors and wildlife and \$561 million on new construction, including exhibits, veterinary care facilities, and classrooms.

Collectively, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums have an enormous social, cultural, educational and economic impact on the American public.

## San Diego Zoo Holds Press Conference Addressing Polar Bear Population Crisis

**December 13, 2006**

The San Diego Zoo hosted a press conference on Wednesday to address wild polar bear population decline and issues affecting their future survival. The press conference was held as a public announcement of the Zoo's commitment with the government of Manitoba, Canada and the non-profit organization Polar Bears International (PBI) to work together to address the population crisis facing polar bears as an indicator species for the growing global challenge of climate change.

As part of the conference, Steven Amstrup, Ph.D., a polar bear expert with the U.S. Geological Survey, announced results from joint American and Canadian studies indicating a quantitative correlation between earlier sea ice melt and lowered polar bear survival in western Hudson Bay, Manitoba, Canada, and confirmed that the bear population is declining. Similarly, the loss of sea ice due to global warming appears to be driving declines in body size and survival rate of polar bear cubs in the southern Beaufort Sea region of northern Alaska and northwestern Canada. Polar bears use the sea ice as a platform for hunting and depend on it entirely for survival. Nearly 20 percent of the sea ice in the Far North has been lost in the last 20 years.

According to Dr. Amstrup, it is imperative to document how bears in the 16 other populations are responding to Arctic climate change so that conservation and management strategies can be developed around the world. He announced the launch of a new research initiative called the Tri-P (Polar Population Project). The Tri-P represents concepts developed by eminent polar bear scientists and is being spearheaded by PBI with help from the San Diego Zoo.

Currently, much of what is known about polar bears is due to long-term studies in the southern Beaufort Sea and western Hudson Bay regions. Those programs must continue to maintain their data baselines into the changing future. Dr. Amstrup emphasized the high priority of using the detailed knowledge available in western Hudson Bay because of the long-term monitoring there to calibrate modern aerial survey methods. When calibrated, these surveys could provide a fast and relatively inexpensive way to help determine the status of at least five other populations that, like bears in western Hudson Bay, are trapped on land in summer.

Dr. Amstrup also emphasized the need to develop appropriate monitoring methods for the world's bear populations that stay on the sea ice all summer. According to Dr. Amstrup, a combination of census and monitoring methods, which may vary in order to fit different geographic regions where polar bears occur, is essential to understand population trends and develop conservation strategies.

Concern over the status of polar bears was also expressed by the premier of Manitoba, Gary Doer, as he announced his government's commitment to addressing climate change. Mr. Doer's government introduced the Polar Bear Protection Act in 2002 and he was recently named by *Business Week* as one of the world's top 20 leaders in clean energy development. In his address, Premier Doer spoke about his vision for clean energy, including the further development of Manitoba's extensive hydroelectric resources, enhanced energy efficiency, and the development of new power sources such as wind, ethanol, and geothermal sources.

Also speaking at the conference, Robert Buchanan, president of PBI, emphasized the education components of the Tri-P initiative to conserve bears and announced numerous plans underway to expand educational opportunities, including utilizing videoconferencing technology to broadcast interviews with researchers from the tundra to classrooms around the country. He also noted the success of the Polar Bear Science Leadership Camp in Churchill that is offered to a dozen teenagers worldwide each year.

The San Diego Zoo works closely with PBI on educational opportunities, including the opportunity for a San Diego high school student to travel to the Arctic to participate in the Science Leadership Camp. Additionally, the San Diego Zoo recently launched a groundbreaking study on polar bear hearing sensitivity. It is hoped that the study will determine how sensitive polar bears are to various tones and frequencies, a fundamental aspect of the bear's biology that is currently undocumented.

## **Aff: Zoos: Pitiful Prisons**

*PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) Media Center*

Despite their professed concern for animals, zoos can more accurately be described as “collections” of interesting “specimens” than actual havens or simulated habitats (real homes). 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.

### **Cost-Cutting Hurts Animals**

Zoos vary in size and quality—from drive-through parks to small roadside menageries with concrete slabs and iron bars. Although more than 135 million people visit zoos in the United States and Canada every year, most zoos operate at a loss and must find ways to cut costs or add gimmicks that will attract visitors. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that “nearly half of the country’s zoos are facing cutbacks this year ... [a]ttendance, meanwhile, is down about 3% nationwide.”

Ultimately, animals are the ones who pay the price. Precious funds that should be used to provide more humane conditions for animals are often squandered on cosmetic improvements, such as landscaping or visitor centers, in order to draw visitors.

The animals on exhibit are not the only ones who suffer. Most zoos have an area that the public never gets to see, where rabbits, rats, mice, baby chicks, and other animals are raised and killed to provide food for the animals on display.

### **Propagation, Not Education**

Zoos claim to educate people and preserve species, but they usually fall short on both counts. Most zoo enclosures are very small, and rather than promoting respect or understanding of animals, signs often provide little more information than an animal’s species, diet, and natural range. Animals’ normal behavior is seldom discussed, much less observed, because their natural needs are rarely met. Birds’ wings may be clipped so that they cannot fly, aquatic animals are often without adequate water, and many animals who live in large herds or family groups in nature are kept alone or, at most, in pairs. Natural hunting and mating behaviors are virtually eliminated by regulated feeding and breeding regimens. Animals are closely confined, lack privacy, and have little opportunity for mental stimulation or physical exercise. These conditions often result in abnormal and self-destructive behaviors or “zoochosis.”

An Oxford University study based on four decades of observing animals in captivity and in the wild found that animals such as polar bears, lions, tigers, and cheetahs “show the most evidence of stress and/or psychological dysfunction in captivity” and concluded that “the keeping of naturally wide-ranging carnivores should be either fundamentally improved or phased out.” A PETA investigation of numerous zoos across the country found that several bear species, including sun, grizzly, Kodiak, spectacled, black, and sloth bears, were exhibiting neurotic, stereotypic behaviors. These frustrated animals spend much of their time pacing, walking in tight circles, swaying or rolling their heads, and showing other signs of psychological distress. In some bear enclosures, paths worn by the bears’ constant pacing can be seen; in others, there are actual paw impressions in the soil where bears have repeatedly stepped in the same spot. These behaviors are not just symptoms of boredom, they indicate profound despondency.

As for the claim that zoos provide educational opportunities—consider that most visitors spend only a few minutes at each display, seeking entertainment rather than enlightenment. 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.” He determined that “officials should stop kidding themselves about the tremendous educational value of showing an animal behind a glass wall.”

The purpose of most zoos’ research is to find ways to breed and maintain more animals in captivity. If zoos ceased to exist, so would the “need” for most of their research. Protecting species from extinction sounds 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. 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.

Most animals housed in zoos are neither endangered nor being prepared for release into natural habitats.

### **Born Free, Sold Out**

Zoos continue to capture animals from the wild to put them on public display. In 2003, the San Diego Wild Animal Park and Lowry Park Zoo captured 11 African elephants, a species designated as threatened, from their natural habitats in Swaziland. Experts, scientists, and researchers who study elephants in the wild strongly opposed the capture, stating, “Taking elephants from the wild is not only traumatic for them, it is also detrimental to their health. ... [W]e believe the time has come to consider them as sentient beings and not as so much money on the hoof to be captured and sold and displayed for our own use.”

Zoos are also pressuring the federal government to weaken the Endangered Species Act to make it easier for them to capture and import animals who are on the brink of extinction.

### **When Cute Little Babies Grow Up**

Zoo babies are crowd-pleasers, but when they get older and attract fewer visitors, many are sold or killed by zoos. Deer, tigers, lions, and other animals who breed frequently are sometimes sold to “game” farms where hunters pay for the “privilege” of killing them; others are killed for their meat and/or hides. Other “surplus” animals may be sold to circuses or smaller, more poorly run zoos.

### **Beyond Zoos**

Ultimately, we will only save endangered species by preserving their habitats and combating the reasons why they are killed by people. Instead of supporting zoos, we should support groups like the International Primate Protection League, the Born Free Foundation, the African Wildlife Foundation, and other groups that work to preserve habitats. We should help nonprofit sanctuaries that are accredited by The Association of Sanctuaries, such as the Elephant Sanctuary and the Performing Animal Welfare Society. These sanctuaries rescue and care for exotic animals without selling or breeding them.

With all the informative television programming, our access to 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. The idea of keeping animals confined behind cage bars is