

Animal captivity: Humane alternative or human amusement.

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They might provide entertainment and conservation but are zoos good for the animals?

Animals kept in captivity receive proper nutrition and medical care. The study of these animals provides good opportunities for research and education which can help with animal conservation and survival. Breeding projects with animals in captivity can help towards preventing extinction.

In captivity animals often live in confined spaces. their natural animal behaviours change out of their natural environment. They can suffer from mental health problems, all for human amusement. Zoos can be costly to run and many struggle financially. Desire breeding programmes, the babies never leave to return to the wild so it does not help the species.

Guy the Gorilla came to London zoo at a very important time, just after the war. "In 1947, people were still suffering from the privations and associated rationing of wartime, even though the conflict had been over for more than two years," says Russell Tofts, of the Bartlett Society, which studies methods of keeping wild animals.

"A zoo offered escapism from all this for the citizens of London and beyond, and it was important for zoo bosses to ensure there was always something new and exciting worth seeing there to entice people through the gates." Guy helped change perceptions of wild animals with his gentle nature, and after his death his body was examined, allowing researchers to learn more about these beautiful creatures.

Sadly being kept close to humans, viruses affected his health before his time, and he died at the young age of 32. However, gorillas have been known to survive longer in zoos than in the wild; Colo, a female gorilla at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium was 60 years old when she passed away earlier this year.

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Tilikum was a whale kept in captivity in Sea World in the USA. Whales are hugely social animals and always want to live and travel together. The lack of social interaction and the tiny enclosure he lived in took its toll on Tilikum. In 1991, Tilikum dragged 21 year old Keltie Byrne, a trainer at Sealand of the Pacific, under the water and prevented her from emerging. "You hear her scream out, 'somebody help me', it was such a bloodcurdling scream", said John Hargrove, former Seaworld Trainer. Tilikum was taken from his mother when he was young, staying in a tiny enclosure spending his days laying in his tank not moving. In the wild whales travel many miles each day. He lived for 30 to 40 years, but orcas in the wild have been known to live well into their 100's. His captivity affected his mental health - he would float motionless for hours in his tiny tank, and his dorsal fin flopped over to one side, something unheard of in wild orcas.

Overall it looks like the cons outweigh the pros. Animals have their own environment and we have invaded that and taken it for our own. Unfortunately, conservations are now a necessity to undo the mess that we have made, but we don't understand wild animals and it is not our business to. Animal captivity is human and inhumane amusement.