

Wild Animals Are Not Pets!

by Holly Bennett



When you see a bright-eyed baby monkey peering up at you, you might wish you could keep it. Wild animals should not be kept as pets, though. It causes a lot of harm – and here's why:

Many animals sold as pets are captured illegally. They usually suffer terribly in the process: for example, mothers may be killed so that their babies can be taken. The animals are then smuggled between countries, so they are often packed tightly into dark, airless containers – sometimes for days. Many of the animals die before they arrive.

The wild pet trade threatens species and their ecosystems.

When a certain 'pet' becomes popular, the exotic animal trade targets that animal too much. The demand for clownfish rose so high after the film *Finding Nemo* that some wild populations are now endangered.



Wild animals rarely live happily as pets.

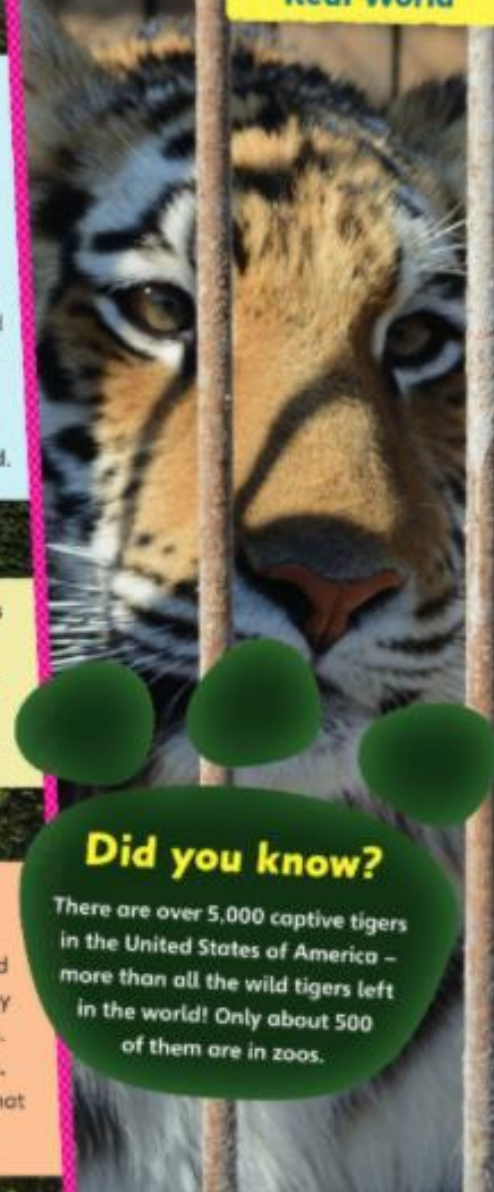
Dogs and cats have evolved to live with humans, but exotic animals rarely get everything they need to be healthy. Most monkeys are very active, social animals, and need sunlight and a special diet. Pet monkeys are prone to malnutrition, tooth decay and terrible stress when they're kept alone and confined.

Exotic animals carry diseases that can spread to humans.

80–90% of macaque monkeys are infected with Herpes B, which can be fatal to humans.

Many exotic pets are abandoned.

When cute babies grow up and their instincts get stronger, they can become difficult to handle. They often become aggressive, and people can't cope with what they've taken on.



Did you know?

There are over 5,000 captive tigers in the United States of America – more than all the wild tigers left in the world! Only about 500 of them are in zoos.

Real World

THE SAD CASE OF THE SLOW LORIS

The slow loris, from Indonesia, is in danger of extinction. Its big brown eyes and small size are very appealing, and thousands of these little primates are poached from the wild for the pet trade.

However, lorises are nocturnal. Just being in a bright room hurts their eyes. They also like to travel long distances, so they can never meet their exercise needs in captivity.

Even worse, poachers usually clip off or pull out their teeth because a slow loris's bite is venomous. As well as being very painful, this can kill the lorises. About half of all lorises caught die during transportation.



What about captive-bred pets?

Captive-bred pets are exotic animals born in captivity, but their parents may have been caught in the wild. This does not repeat the damage caused by capturing wild animals, but many captive-bred animals are still unsuited to being pets. They are just as likely to be abandoned.



Real World

POOR POLLY

Parrots, with their colourful plumage and big personalities, have been popular pets for many years. You might think that, by now, pet parrots would all be bred in captivity – but hundreds of thousands of parrots are taken from their jungle habitats every year. One third of parrot species are close to extinction, partly because of the pet trade.

The death rate of captured parrots while they are being transported is very high. Baby parrots may be stuffed into tubes to hide them, or have their beaks taped shut to keep them quiet. Some estimates say that 75% of parrots die before they can be sold as pets.



Did you know?

The North American raccoon is friendly and cute when young, but becomes more aggressive in adulthood. In Japan, thousands were imported as pets – all because of a popular cartoon. As they grew up, many were released into the wild. Raccoons are very adaptable and, with no natural predators, are now a very troublesome invasive species in Japan.

