

Positive and Negative Effects of Using Animals as Humans' Entertainment Purposes

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Abstract. Animals have been used for human beings' entertainment for centuries. The problem existed now will be whether humans should stop using animals for their entertainment purposes or not. This study analyzes the causes and consequences of using animals for humans' entertainment and compares the benefits and drawbacks resulted from it in order to give out appropriate measures to solve the problem of animals being abused by humans. This study first introduces the history of animals being used as humans' entertainment purposes and then it analyzes the reasons behind this. It mainly discusses about the effects that animals being used as humans' entertainment purposes can result in, including both negative ones and positive ones. It then quotes multiple perspectives towards the phenomenon, including opponents arguing that animals should never be used for human beings' entertainment because they also deserve to have their freedoms as humans do, and advocates suggesting that people catching animals in cages is sometimes actually helping them. Finally, it suggests appropriate courses of action to solve the issue. Encouraging people to stop supporting zoos and circuses that are not yet proven to have suitable treatments towards animals and shutting down zoos and circuses having cruel treatments towards animals will be the next steps to relieve the phenomenon. This study is hoped to raise people's awareness of being concerned with those animals that are suffered from humans' cruel treatments and change some animal conservationists' stereotype that using animals for humans' entertainment is always unethical.

Keywords: Animal entertainment, animal abuse, circuses, zoos, natural reserves.

1. Introduction

Animals have been used for human beings' entertainment for centuries. Thousands of years ago, gladiators in ancient Rome fought against lions, bears, and other alien species in the great shows held at that time, in a way to satisfy the wants from the public to watch wild animals performing before them [1]. However, some ways to use animals for entertainment purposes like circuses and marine animal shows are always criticized by many animal conservationists because they restrict animals' freedom: Animals are caged within a small space and trained for performances which are forced by the staff in the circus with cruel treatments. For example, elephants are beaten with bullhooks and many big cats have their teeth and claws removed in circuses [2] (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Abuse towards a tiger in a show by the staff.

<https://www.animalsasia.org/us/media/news/news-archive/why-animals-should-not-be-in-circuses.html>

Using animals in entertainment is also defined as forcing wild animals to parade and perform tricks in serious restriction, which deprives anything that may meet their complicated physical, behavioral, and emotional demands, showing the bad impression that many animal conservation organizations have towards animal entertainment [3]. Despite this, annually more than 700 million people in the world still go to visit zoos and aquariums [4]. This study aims to distinguish positive effects from negative effects of using animals for humans' entertainment and solve the problem of animals being abused by humans through suggesting appropriate measures. This can raise people's awareness of being concerned with those animals that are suffered from humans' cruel treatments and change some animal conservationists' stereotype that using animals for humans' entertainment is always unethical.

There are a lot of online articles, books and websites focused on the topic of animals in entertainment. However, most of them just state about the harms and restrictions that being used for humans' entertainment can bring to animals, and only a small part of them have talked about the benefits it can give. More importantly, there are only a few studies online discussing about the courses of action to solve the issue. Therefore, this study is going to compare the benefits and drawbacks resulted from using animals for humans' entertainment in order to summarize appropriate measures to address the issue.

Then, whether the benefits of using animals as humans' entertainment purposes outweigh its drawbacks or not will be a controversial topic to discuss. This study introduces the history of animals being used as humans' entertainment purposes, analyzes the reasons behind this, discusses the effects it can bring including different global, national and local perspectives towards it, and finally suggests appropriate courses of action to solve the issue.

2. History of Animals Being Used as Humans' Entertainment Purposes

Historically human beings have used animals for entertainment purposes and continue to do so today. Ancient humans would tease animals like elephants, bears, giraffes, and large cats for entertainment, with the tradition being continued in future generations. Dated back to thousands of years ago, animals were already used for human entertainment by the Kings of Babylon and Assyria in the Mesopotamian empires: with the help from crowds of dogs, wild animals were trapped in fences and killed by humans driving chariots [5]. Ancient rulers in Egypt, China and Rome also started to collect animals from other areas, standing for power and wealth, and their allies gave them animals as gifts too. People then tried to catch animals for educational purposes, and Greeks were among the first to do this. As mentioned in the introduction, the Romans enforced wild beasts that were goaded by gladiators to fight until death inside large arenas, in order to please the crowds [6]. Even after the declining of Roman Empire, the animal parades continued to represent power and control. Rulers in the Middle-Ages still collected wild animals for their pleasure, and also as a symbol of their domination over the mysterious wild. The citizens' attention in these animals was not yet weakened. Caravans carrying trained beasts would travel to the public in the case of lacking large stadiums to exhibit them, and these gradually developed into circuses nowadays [1].

These circuses soon became popular throughout Europe and the Americas by the 1790s, however, they were often not elaborated. In around 1815, an early precursor in this industry, Hackaliah Bailey, who was a native in New York, brought a single elephant to travel throughout New England. He finally succeeded, which motivated many imitators. Soon exotic creatures all around the world were imported to be exploited for profit. Probably the most successful person among these circus magnates was P.T. Barnum, who started "Barnum's American Museum" in New York in 1841. Barnum was a master promoter and became enormously rich by exhibiting not only wild creatures, but also human "freaks" and other invented curiosities, like a "mermaid", which turned out to be just the body from a fish with the head from a monkey sewn on it. In 1860, in order to meet his audiences' desires to see new wonders, Barnum decided to add whales to his show, and he also became the first one to do this. He bought two white whales at first, that were put in a tank filled with fresh water and unsurprisingly died after only a few days. Barnum then purchased four more whales and just two of them could

survive long enough time to be displayed in their poorly designed captivity [1]. This was probably the origin of marine parks nowadays.

3. Reasons of Animals Are Used as Humans' Entertainment Purposes

First of all, holding animal shows can really make a lot of profit. Annually people spend millions in zoos, and other venues using animals as entertainment. This shows that there is a huge demand to see animals. By the official report of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), more than 183 million tourists annually are served by the 215 American zoos and aquariums accredited by AZA, and they also sustain over 212,000 jobs. In addition, the entire worth of goods and services produced directly and indirectly as a result from yearly expenditures by AZA members and their guests is \$24 billion [7]. Such demand and profits will likely mean that there is no incentive for an outright ban on all forms of animal entertainment, from either the general public or those making the money.

Another important reason is just satisfying people's curiosity of seeing performances carried by animals, especially for children. Popular animals found in circuses and zoos are usually large wild animals, including zebra, elephant, lion, giraffe, gorilla, etc. which can bring strong visual effects to the visitors. Performances in circuses like having lion tamers put their heads in the mouths of large cats or forcing elephants march in a line while holding one another's tails have stunned audiences to a large extent. However, the grace of performances by the elephants is an "illusion": The staff holds a stick decorated with flowers to "control" the elephants, but it is actually made possible by a sharp iron hook disguised into the stick, so it can then jab into the elephant's ear when it becomes disobedient. Many former circus trainers also testify that the entertainment that animals in circuses provide for spectators is actually based on violent and brutal procedures used to train them. It seems ideal to bring kids to attractions such as SeaWorld so they can learn about marine animals. However, because they are deprived of their natural environments, freedoms, and social relationships in these parks, large sea mammals like dolphins and orcas experience significant rates of mortality. They typically swim a daily distance of 60 to 90 miles in their natural habitats, in contrast [6].

There are a variety of other popular ways of amusement causing potential suffering of wild animals, such as zoos, rodeos, bull riding, bullfighting, and even films and television. These ways can all please visitors, but at the same time they also result in discomforts of wild animals to different extents, as animals in zoos are caged in a small space, bulls can be hurt or even die in bullfights and animals who are considered useless as actors in a film are discarded at dirty roadside zoos and inferior facilities [6].

4. Effects of Animals Being Used as Humans' Entertainment Purposes

4.1. Positive Effects

Using animals for entertainment is actually a good way to positively protect endangered animals. They can be preserved well in zoos or circuses and when they are bred artificially by the staff to produce offspring, the number of individuals in the species can therefore increase so it actually can provide a potential avenue for animal protection [8]. Many animals that were once an endangered species, were bred in captivity increasing their chance of survival. For example, Arabian oryx, California condor and corroboree frog were saved from the brink of extinction by zoo conservation [9]. Therefore, more endangered species can be involved in the protection when more zoos or animal shows are held by people and their number can be improved. If animal performance is banned, less endangered animals will be under the protection which can increase the chance of their extinction.

There are also many ideas from official journals and authoritative experts that using animals for entertainment purposes can actually be acceptable. The Radford Report in the UK concluded in 2006 after a six-month investigation into circuses that they are equally capable of providing for the welfare needs of the animals under their care as any other types of captivity environment [8]. Another illustration is the study Dr. Marthe Kiley-Worthington conducted on circus animals in comparison to

those found in zoos and the wild, which was commissioned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Despite the need for changes, she came to the conclusion that circuses do not naturally result in the pain and discomfort of animals. She also did not believe that efforts to outlaw circuses and zoos, whether locally or nationally, are necessarily in the best interests of the animals [10].

4.2. Negative Effects

There are obviously negative effects though. Many animals suffer from being used for entertainment purposes. Animals in zoos and circuses have lost their freedom and may be injured or even die during the training process as the trainers will flog them to perform. One case of a wild animal being killed for acting on its primal instincts is the death of the gorilla Harambe at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2016. Harambe pulled a little boy after he fell into the gorilla enclosure by accident. When zoogoers' screams scared Harambe, the boy was dragged by Harambe to another area within the enclosure. Sadly, Harambe was then killed by shots, as the guards were attempting to save the boy from being mauled by Harambe [6]. This example shows the potential dangers towards the animals in zoos or circuses that may occur as animals can be easily enraged and may hurt or even die when people use violent means to stop them.

The major standpoint globally is that animals should never be used for humans' entertainment. For instance, The Humane League uses the definition of animal rights to claim that animals other than humans ought to be allowed to live as freely as possible, independent from human desires [11]. Another organization called People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) also claims that animals are not actors, freak shows for people to gaze at, or clowns from a circus, and animals do not like performing for humans, as they are mostly mistreated to be used for humans' entertainment purposes [12], which strongly refuses that animals are used for entertainment purposes.

Locally, Animals Asia Foundation in Hong Kong also says that the fact about circus animals is that they are mistreated, live in abject misery, and some of them are even caught from the wild for the sole purpose of entertainment in a news article. Then it lists several facts about animals being abused in circuses to prove its viewpoint in the article [2].

5. Measures

There are many organizations and governments all around the world already starting to take some actions to prevent wild animals from being abused by humans. The national government in South Africa builds safari parks which are known as a type of 'wild' zoo where wild animals are able to move around freely and are watched by visitors from their cars, trying to solve the problem that animals are over-abused in zoos. For example, Kruger National Park in South Africa, which spans over 7,000 miles, is a reputable safari park that releases animals into their natural environments while overseeing them and keeping them from external dangers. It can therefore be a more natural alternative to captivity because it enables animals to engage in instinctive behaviors without being restricted by cages or glass walls [6]. There are no barriers to change for using safari-style zoos as all people are wishing that the creatures in our surroundings can be treated well without cages and glass walls and still have their freedom. However, the costs to construct such an environment can be very high as it may involve the security system to avoid animals from escaping the zoo and the detection system to record the tracks of the animals. Constructing it may also take a very long time so it may not be a very efficient method.

International animal reservation organizations also advocate for pro-animal legislation to save animals in zoos and circuses from being abused. For example, PETA started to support a new proposal that aimed to stop circus cruelty in California - the Circus Cruelty Prevention Act on February 19th, 2019. In the end, they succeeded - the Circus Cruelty Prevention Act had finally passed on October 12th, 2019, which prohibited the use of most animals in circuses such as tigers, elephants and bears [13]. It could suddenly have an effect as it is a bill that was promulgated by the state government in

California and could compel the circus holders to stop abusing animals. However, there may be some barriers to change because the organizers of circuses may complain that they can no longer make any profit, but they are eventually forced by the law to release the animals so it can still be an effective method.

6. Conclusion

Until now, there are still millions of animals all around the world suffering from being abused for human's entertainment purposes in a variety of ways. This study first introduces the history of animals being used as humans' entertainment purposes and then it analyzes the reasons behind this. It mainly discusses about the effects that animals being used as humans' entertainment purposes can result in, including both negative ones and positive ones. It then quotes multiple perspectives towards the phenomenon, including opponents arguing that animals should never be used for human beings' entertainment because they also deserve to have their freedoms as humans do, and advocates suggesting that people catching animals in cages is sometimes actually helping them. Finally, it suggests appropriate courses of action to solve the issue. Animals can benefit from using them for humans' entertainment purposes as this can help them to escape from dangers and extinction. However, over-abusing the animals should be avoided as this not only causes suffering of animals, but also results in injuries of the visitors because wild beasts can be easily annoyed to attack the people around. Encouraging people to stop supporting zoos and circuses that are not yet proven to have suitable treatments towards animals and shutting down zoos and circuses having cruel treatments towards animals will be the next steps to relieve the phenomenon. This study is hoped to raise people's awareness of being concerned with those animals that are suffered from humans' cruel treatments and change some animal conservationists' stereotype that using animals for humans' entertainment is always unethical.

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