

One Viewpoint by John K. Babb

There are a group of people that believe the keeping of wild animals as pets should be made illegal. This group also opposes the propagation of wildlife in the private sector. This is one viewpoint; but I hold another.

Many people would rebuke this argument with a simple statement of- "It is my right to keep wild animals as pets!". Although the statement may be a factual one at present, this legal right may not always exist. So let me go beyond this rebuttal, which is one that can be easily compared to a child's reply of "because!" when a question is put to him, and address the main issue directly. Remember, our agreement as a people to protect the rights of all to disagree openly is an essential part of how new laws are made and old ones are upheld. So in expressing the reasoning behind my one viewpoint maybe I can change someone's mind or at least show them how I arrived at my way of thinking.

Mankind is but a part of the ecology of this planet. We can't simply separate ourselves from the other animals in our environment. In fact, by doing so would be effecting the lives of the very animals with which we are trying to separate ourselves. It has even been stated that the mere observance of our environment effects it's processes. When we shine a light on something in order to observe it we have in fact changed what we are observing. Man's over population and destruction of habitat is a fact whether we like it or not and is an example of the unavoidable influence we have on the animal kingdom. Therefore, it is not whether or not to interact but rather how we choose to interact with our brother animals.

In my heart, I just can not believe that my serval cat that plays with me so eagerly and receives the best veterinary care, the best nutrition, a great deal of space in which to play freely with his mate, is being mistreated either physically or philosophically. The domestic cats of today were once wild but over time became domesticated because it brought great joy to the people who kept them. The domestic cat itself has flourished, unlike many wild species of today which with their habitats disappearing and their numbers decreasing, are in danger of possible extinction unless man intervenes positively.

Many within the group of people which disagree with my viewpoint have no problems with wild animals kept in a zoo. In response to this I simply say there is nothing magical about the word 'zoo'. For a relatively nominal fee and some additional paper work a private owner's facility can be legally categorized as a "zoo". This guarantees no better or worse treatment of the animals. As in all walks of life, there exists both good and bad. There are good responsible zoos and ones not quite so responsible. Another fact about zoos is that many of them don't have breeding programs for all of their exhibits so they go to the private sector in order to replenish or improve their animal populations. For some species of animals private ownership and propagation programs are the only thing between them and outright extinction. The increasing number of private breeders also helps with the problem of breeding animals to closely related and thereby eliminating certain genetic defects in-breeding can cause. To conclude this point, I personally have seen many private facilities far superior in both size, animal care, and maintenance than those offered a particular species of animal within a 'zoo'.

In the final analysis, if the animal is well cared for physically, mentally, and shown compassion with a commitment to last the animals entire lifetime then a healthy and beneficial interaction for both man and animal exists. This is one viewpoint.

John K. Babb
Valley Stables and Exotic Alternative Livestock
Berea, KY

(606) 925-2242