

Should There Be Zoos?

A Persuasive Text



Written by Tony Stead

with Judy Ballester and her
fourth-grade class

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Introduction

What Is a Zoo?

This book focuses on the question, *Should animals be kept in zoos?* When we began researching this topic, the first thing we had to do was define the word, *zoo*. This is our definition.

A zoo is a public place where living animals are kept in some type of enclosure. For aquatic animals, a zoo can be an aquarium. For the purposes of this book, we are including aquariums as zoos. We also feel that wildlife centers, safari parks, and refuge centers can be thought of as zoos.



However, we have chosen not to include circuses because we think circuses are different from zoos. A circus uses animals exclusively to entertain people. A zoo provides animal entertainment for people as only *part* of its purpose.

What Is a Persuasive Text?

This book is a persuasive text. We've written our opinions about a topic and supported them with facts. We have found these facts on the Internet, in newspaper and magazine articles, on a field trip, and in books. We have used all of the facts to try to persuade, or convince, you to feel the same way we do.

Some of us are going to try to convince you that zoos are necessary. We will argue that zoos help prevent extinction, provide protection and care for animals, and help us learn more about animals and their habitats.

Others of us are going to try to persuade you that animals should not be confined to zoos. We will argue that such confinement can cause death, disease, and a mental illness known as zoochosis. We will also argue that it is not natural to confine animals, and that zoos do not always provide protection and care.

At the end of the book, we will show you the steps we used to write this persuasive text in case you want to write your own.

Should Animals Be Kept in Zoos? You Make the Decision

At the end of each argument in this book, you will see a cartoon character. This is Zooasaurus.



If Zooasaurus is holding up a green flag, it means this is an argument *for* zoos. If Zooasaurus is holding up a red flag, it means this is an argument *against* zoos. After you read each argument, you will need to decide how convincing the argument was.

Give the argument 3 points if you think it was a very strong one. Give the argument 2 points if you think it was adequate, and 1 point if you think it was poor. Keep a piece of paper and a pencil handy as you read through the book so that you can record your points. At the end of the book, tally up all the points that were in favor of having zoos; then tally up all those against having zoos. This will help you decide how effective we were at convincing you whether or not animals should be kept in zoos. Happy reading!

Extinction and Endangered Animals

"Zoos must intervene, to help prevent extinction."—RONNY CALLE

Our world is losing wildlife at an alarming rate. Scientists estimate that 50,000 species of plants and animals are doomed to extinction each year—that's about six an hour. From toads to tigers, animals everywhere are in a fight for their future. Who's to blame? We are. The global human population of almost six billion is increasing by about 85 million each year. As our species takes over wildlife habitats, other species are threatened, and in many cases, lost. "When the last individual of a race of living things breathes no more, another heaven and earth must pass before such one can be again."



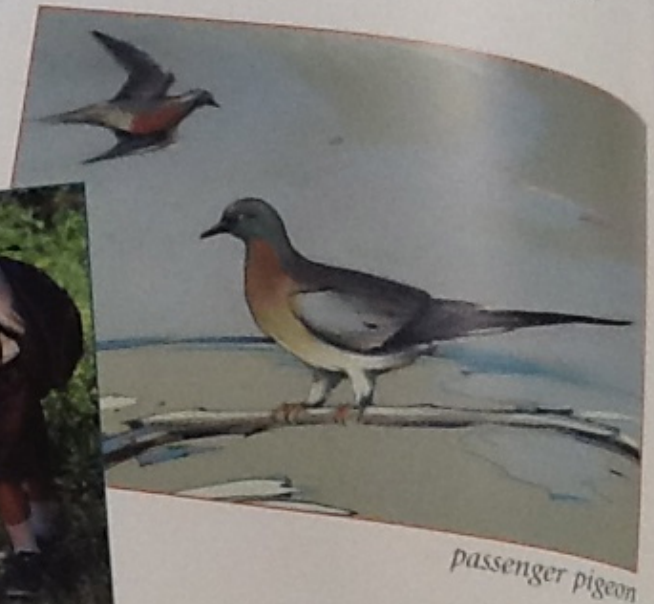
Dodo bird

Dodo birds roamed our earth hundreds of years ago, but now they are extinct—gone forever! Dodos were fat birds with tiny wings. They were unable to fly. In the late 1500s, people from Europe came to the islands where dodos lived. They found the dodos tasty and easy to catch. In less than 100 years, dodos became extinct. People were shocked. How could an entire species be wiped out in such a short period of time? It was truly unbelievable!

Animals like the Atlas bear were not killed primarily by people. Their population slowly diminished as their habitat began to disappear. Atlas bears lived in the forests of North Africa. These forests had an abundance of trees. People started cutting down the trees. The Atlas bears were losing their habitat quickly! Over time, the land became a desert. By the late 1800s, these bears became extinct as well.



tombstone listing endangered animals of the 1500s



passenger pigeon

Another example is the passenger pigeon. These birds migrated in flocks, so you would think they would be safe. Wrong! Humans started shooting these pigeons for pure enjoyment. Others sold the birds for food. The last living passenger pigeon was seen in September 1914.

Has our species, the human race, ever been hunted for food? I can't even begin to think what this would feel like. Imagine going to bed each evening and wondering if you would see the next sunrise. Unfortunately, if you were a Rodriguez greater tortoise, you *would* understand. These tortoises were the main meal for

the French and the English navies. Ships would stop at the Rodriguez Islands to round up tortoises before embarking on a long voyage. The tortoise population began to shrink. Laws were passed about the number of tortoises the people onboard the ships could take with them. However, no one obeyed these laws. Didn't these people realize that if they kept eating these animals at such a fast pace, there wouldn't be any left? Apparently not. By 1795, the Rodriguez greater tortoises were gone forever!



tombstone listing endangered animals of the 1900s

Although there is no hope left for these animals, there is a lot we can do for so many other animals whose existence is in danger. If your mom or dad or your best friend was very ill, wouldn't you want to help? Of course you would. We need to aid those animals who are in danger of becoming extinct, and zoos are our best answer.

Animals in the wild are never free from predators, disease, loss of their natural habitats, and starvation. A good zoo, however, can provide food, shelter, and preservation of wildlife.

"Imagine endangered animals out in the wild, all alone."

—GUCCI ATEHONTUA



Animals that live in very small numbers and are in danger of disappearing forever are called endangered. People cause three main types of danger to animals. First, animals are overhunted for food, for their hides, or just for sport. Second, animals are losing their natural habitats. People chop down trees for lumber. They clear fields to plant crops, and they fill swamps to build towns and highways. Third, animal habitats are becoming unhealthy due to pollution. Oil spills pollute the water, harming aquatic animals. The spraying of pesticides by farmers causes harm to other animals.

Imagine never seeing a bird fly in the sky or never hearing a bee buzzing in an energetic search for pollen. Imagine never seeing a caterpillar transform into a glorious butterfly. Hard to believe, isn't it? You know that if you break the food chain, everything slowly ceases to exist. That means people will die as well.

There are many animals throughout the world, like the giant panda, the tiger, and the orangutan, that are in great danger. How can we save our wildlife? We can ask zoos to help.

