

Why Zoos Are Good

A. In my view, it is perfectly possible for many species of animals living in zoos or wildlife parks to have a quality of life as high as, or higher than, in the wild. Animals in good zoos get a varied and high-quality diet with all the supplements required, and any illnesses they might have will be treated. Their movement might be somewhat restricted, but they have a safe environment in which to live, and they are spared bullying and social ostracism by others of their kind. They do not suffer from the threat or stress of predators, or the irritation and pain of parasites or injuries. The average captive animal will have a greater life expectancy compared with its wild counterpart, and will not die of drought, of starvation or in the jaws of a predator. A lot of very nasty things happen to truly 'wild' animals that simply don't happen in good zoos, and to view a life that is 'free' as one that is automatically 'good' is, I think, an error. Furthermore, zoos serve several key purposes.

B. Firstly, zoos aid conservation. Colossal numbers of species are becoming extinct across the world, and many more are increasingly threatened and therefore risk extinction. Moreover, some of these collapses have been sudden, dramatic and unexpected, or were simply discovered very late in the day. A species protected in captivity can be bred up to provide a reservoir population against a population crash or extinction in the wild. A good number of species only exist in captivity, with many of these living in zoos. Still more only exist in the wild because they have been reintroduced from zoos, or have wild populations that have been boosted by captive bred animals. Without these efforts there would be fewer species alive today. Although reintroduction successes are few and far between, the numbers are increasing, and the very fact that species have been saved or reintroduced as a result of captive breeding proves the value of such initiatives.

C. Zoos also provide education. Many children and adults, especially those in cities, will never see a wild animal beyond a fox or pigeon. While it is true that television documentaries are becoming ever more detailed and impressive, and many natural history specimens are on display in museums, there really is nothing to compare with seeing a living creature in the flesh, hearing it, smelling it, watching what it does and having the time to absorb details. That alone will bring a greater understanding and perspective to many, and hopefully give them a greater appreciation for wildlife, conservation efforts and how they can contribute.

D. In addition to this, there is also the education that can take place in zoos through signs, talks and presentations which directly communicate information to visitors about the animals they are seeing and their place in the world. This was an area where zoos used to be lacking, but they are now increasingly sophisticated in their communication and outreach work. Many zoos also work directly to educate conservation workers in other countries, or send their animal keepers abroad to contribute their knowledge and skills to those working in zoos and reserves, thereby helping to improve conditions and reintroductions all over the world.

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the reading passage?

Write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

1 An animal is likely to live longer in a zoo than in the wild. _____

2 There are some species in zoos which can no longer be found in the wild. _____

3 Improvements in the quality of TV wildlife documentaries have resulted in increased numbers of zoo visitors.

4 Zoos have always excelled at transmitting information about animals to the public. _____