



May 5, 2017

Dr. Katherine S. Conway-Turner
President, SUNY Buffalo State
Sent via email: president@buffalostate.edu

Dear Dr. Conway-Turner,

On April 24th, student newspaper The Record [reported](#) on Carmen Presti of The Primate Sanctuary of Niagara Falls bringing five primates to an Anthropology Society annual event at SUNY Buffalo State. The article mentioned how Presti “educated” attendees about how to diaper primates and why they are necessary for animal testing. As experts in the field of primate care, we implore SUNY Buffalo State to reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of animals.

This article, and the event that took place, are quite harmful for a number of reasons. Encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals like monkeys is harmful and dangerous to all involved. A true sanctuary would never promote the diapering of primates, which is unnatural and widely advised against because it causes physical ailments ranging from terrible rashes and infections to limb abnormalities.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of eleven of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 700 primates who were retired from laboratory research, entertainment and private ownership, including many who were previously diapered and handled in public as Mr. Presti is wont to do. We see daily evidence of how this affects primates throughout their entire life, including physical ailments, social disorders, self-injurious behavior and depression.

Reputable primate sanctuaries never show off their animals in public. NAPSA members are contacted constantly by people who – perhaps because they saw cute monkeys being handled in front of a crowd– purchased a baby monkey and then lived to regret it. Attached are NAPSA’s Position Statements on Private Ownership of Primates and Pseudo-Sanctuaries vs. Real Sanctuaries so you may learn more.

Research has proven that the type of exploitive “education” promoted at this Anthropology Society event is not only ineffective but actually has negative consequences for conservation and animal welfare. We hope you will reconsider the message SUNY Buffalo State spreads at such events. Irresponsible treatment of exotic animals should never be promoted, especially not by an institution of higher learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erika Fleury'.

Erika Fleury
Program Director



Advocacy Position Statement Private Ownership of Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the private ownership of primates.

Unlike dogs and cats, apes and monkeys are not domesticated animals. Non-human primates are extremely social animals whose normal development requires the company of others of their own kind. Ideally, primates should live in the wild. Their natural habitats include species-typical social groups that allow them to learn from their families and have a rich emotional life. In reality, however, there is an active industry that breeds primates to sell as pets in human homes.

As infants, primates in the pet trade are removed from their mothers years before they would naturally separate, which causes psychological suffering that manifests throughout their entire life. Teeth are often removed for ease of handling, which can limit the foods they can eat. Qualified veterinary care for pet primates can be difficult, if not impossible, to find.

Primates are inquisitive animals whose proper care requires daily mental stimulation and extensive physical activity, which is often impossible for the average household to provide. Primates kept in human homes are rarely, if ever, monitored by animal welfare officials, which means they are often kept in unsuitable living conditions resulting in neglect, mistreatment, and myriad psychological and physical ailments that can lead to death. There are a range of zoonotic diseases that are transmitted by primates and can be harmful, even fatal, to humans.

Once primates reach adolescence, which can be just a few years into a 40+ year lifespan, they inevitably become too unmanageable to handle. Primates can and will bite. They have strong jaws and sharp teeth, and bites can result in significant and potentially fatal injuries to humans. Realizing that living with an adult primate is not sustainable, owners often seek to surrender their pets or are forced to surrender them due to a threat to public safety.

Many primates that were privately owned end up living in roadside zoos, recycled as breeders to produce the next generation of ill-fated pets, or in other abusive situations. In the best cases, former pets may end up in a NAPSA member sanctuary, where they live their remaining years in an enriched environment more typical to their species. Even in sanctuary, former pets often struggle with learning how to socialize with other primates and many exhibit abnormal behaviors for the rest of their lives.

The private ownership of primates is never in the best interest of the animal or the owner.

For more information:

["Resolution and Policy Recommendation Addressing the Private Possession of Dangerous Wild Animals,"](#) American Bar Association

["White Paper: Personal Possession of Non-Human Primates,"](#) Association of Zoos and Aquariums

["The Phenomenon of Monkeys as 'Surrogate Children',"](#) Linda J. Howard

["My Child is a Monkey,"](#) and ["The Perils of Keeping Monkeys as Pets,"](#) National Geographic

["The Science Behind Why Chimps Are Not Pets,"](#) PBS

["Significant Zoonotic Disease of Non-Human Primates,"](#) Walter Reed Army Institute



Position Statement

True Sanctuaries vs. Pseudo-Sanctuaries

The mission of the North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is to advance and advocate for the welfare of captive primates. NAPSA member sanctuaries care for over 670 nonhuman primates retired from the entertainment, biomedical research, and exotic pet industries, and are experts in providing enriched lifetime care to captive animals. As there are no regulations in the United States that manage who may refer to themselves as a sanctuary, it is important for NAPSA members to distinguish themselves from other facilities who house captive animals but who do not operate with the same high standards, and may even exploit and harm the animals in their care.

It can be difficult to distinguish pseudo-sanctuaries from reputable sanctuaries. There are a number of key characteristics the public may look for when trying to make this determination.

True sanctuaries:

- Operate with the best interests of the animals in their care as their first priority.
- Are non-profit organizations.
- Do not breed, sell or trade the animals in their care.
- Do not allow public contact with captive wildlife.
- Do not remove animals from their enclosures or sanctuary property for exhibition, education, research, or commercial purposes.
- Have limited public visitation.
- Do not exploit the animals in their care. Examples include: photo opportunities with animals, hands-on interactions, or training animals to perform.
- Are fiscally responsible and able to provide lifetime care for all animals at the sanctuary.
- Advocate on behalf of the species in their care.
- Are licensed, accredited and/or overseen by outside organizations. This may include the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, the United States Department of Agriculture, and/or NAPSA.