



September 11, 2017

East Texas Zoo and Gator Park
via Facebook

Dear Management of East Texas Zoo and Gator Park,

We write to you in response to your Facebook photos that featured a diapered infant spider monkey in a car and [being carried to a public event](#). Although you may not realize it, photos like yours serve to condone primate exploitation. Encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals is harmful and dangerous to all involved. As experts in the field of primate care, we implore you to reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of animals.

We appreciate that you are animal lovers, which is why your photos are so concerning. The extremely young monkey you are carrying around should be living as a monkey, with other monkeys, and not being exposed to dangerous and frightening stimuli at promotional store openings. Primates are highly social animals that require the company of conspecifics, and infancy is a key time for monkeys to learn and develop species-appropriate behaviors. Monkeys who are humanized at young ages are not able to socialize with others later in life. The wearing of human clothes and diapers can cause skin ailments and permanent disfigurement. Both of these highly abnormal practices result in monkeys that grow into physically and mentally unwell individuals who often display a host of stereotypical behaviors including self-harm, obsessive compulsions, aggression and depression. How do we know this? We see it every day in the monkeys living in our sanctuaries.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of ten of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 700 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as pets or entertainers.

Research has shown that inappropriate imagery of primates has a [negative effect](#) on conservation and primates' involvement in the pet trade. You would be wise to reconsider diapering and toting around infant monkeys, as it brings negative attention to East Texas Zoo and Gator Park.

Sincerely,

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

Erika Fleury
Program Director