



November 9, 2017

State Gazette
via website: Stategazette.com

Dear Editor,

We write to you in response to your recent article "[Locals Go Bananas for the Monkey Boo! Bash.](#)" Although it may seem like a harmless and cute event, promoting this gathering is directly condoning primate suffering and may even involve the illegal transport of animals. Encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals is harmful to all involved. As experts in the field of primate care, we implore you to reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of animals.

States are increasingly restricting the private ownership of primates. Although it is still legal to own monkeys in Tennessee, it is illegal in bordering states like Kentucky and Georgia and transportation of monkeys through these states could result in fines and confiscation of the animal.

The owners of pet monkeys claim to be animal lovers, but their "love" causes direct harm. The photos you printed say it all: in the pet trade, and at this party in particular, monkeys involuntarily wear clothing, are fed sugary and unhealthy food, and are forced into public gatherings with primates of vastly different species, which is uncomfortable and no doubt frightening to them. The monkeys depicted should be living as monkeys, with other monkeys of their species in a more natural setting. 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. The wearing of human clothes and diapers can cause skin ailments and permanent disfigurement. The abnormal practices depicted create monkeys that grow into physically and mentally unwell individuals prone to self-harm, obsessive compulsions, aggression and depression. How do we know this? We see it every day in the monkeys living in our sanctuaries, many of whom started their lives as pets until their owners were no longer able to keep them, often after a human was injured by their pet primate.

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 and have personal experience with the sad results of monkeys kept as pets. I'd be happy to talk to you further about these issues.

Sincerely,

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