Apes & monkeys in entertainment: 2018 update

Hello!

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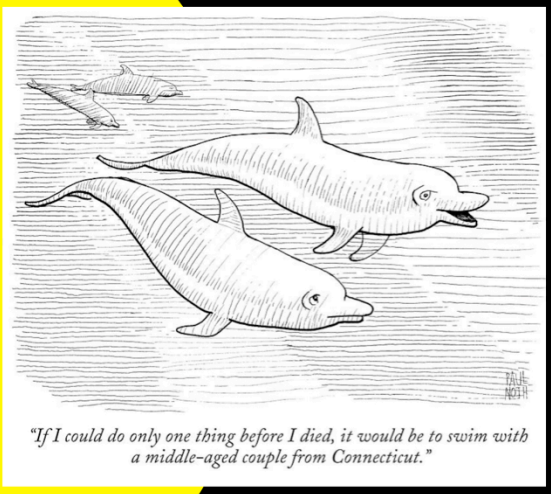
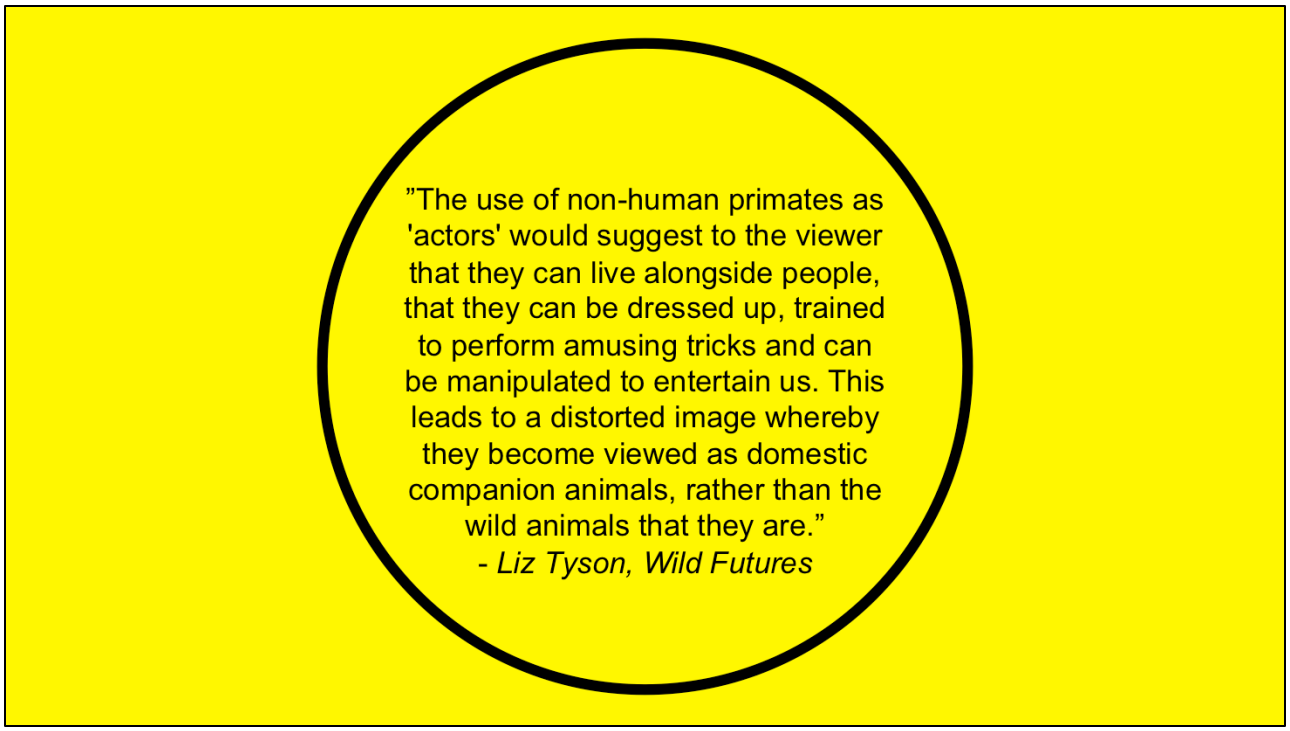


"If I could do only one thing before I died, it would be to swim with a middle-aged couple from Connecticut."

Agenda

- Depiction of NHPs in media
- Film, TV & ads
- Stock images
- Social media
- Food for thought

- Chimpanzees and capuchin monkeys are featured the most frequently in media. Orangutans, other monkeys, lemurs and gibbons are featured occasionally, but those uses are more rare.



The depiction of NHPs in media is of great concern to our community, because inappropriate images of primates contribute to the misconception that primates can be pets.

Depiction of NHPs in media

- Aldrich, BA. The Use of Primate 'Actors' in Feature Films 1990–2013. *Anthrozoös*, 2018; 31 (1): 5
- Ross SR, Vreeman VM, Lonsdorf EV (2011) Specific Image Characteristics Influence Attitudes about Chimpanzee Conservation and Use as Pets. PLoS ONE 6(7): e22050
- Ross, S.R., Lukas, K.E., Lonsdorf, E.V., Stoinski, T.S., Hare, B., Shumaker, R., & Goodall, J.C. (2008). Science priorities. Inappropriate use and portrayal of chimpanzees. *Science, 319 5869*, 1487
- Schroepfer KK, Rosati AG, Chartrand T, Hare B (2011) Use of "Entertainment" Chimpanzees in Commercials Distorts Public Perception Regarding Their Conservation Status. PLoS ONE 6(10): e26048

- Also, a number of recent studies show the inappropriate portrayal of primates (specifically chimpanzees) in media affects the public's awareness of their conservation status, making it more difficult to generate concern for the plight of endangered primates.

- Earlier this year, Brooke Aldrich of Neotropical Primate Conservation published an interesting study examining the frequency of use of primates in film trailers between 1990 and 2013. She did not find a significant increase or decrease in their use over this time frame.

- However, chimps have traditionally been featured more frequently on TV shows and commercials than in film, and there has been some progress in these areas.

Chimps in media in the U.S.

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	Total
Film	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3
TV	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	5	6	4	23
Ads	0	0	1 (-1)	4 (-3)	3 (-2)	3 (-3)	9 (-4)	6 (-3)	7 (-6)	7 (-3)	40 (-25)

Only 3 films featured chimps since 2009.

TV shows – mostly reality show or game show appearances

Decrease in use in ads. Last time chimp was in an ad was 2016 - a GEICO ad that was pulled after a few days.

25 of the 40 ads were pulled after the companies received complaints from PETA and other groups

Some reasons that might account for less frequent use of chimps in ads over last couple of years:

- Better more accessible and affordable CGI technology
- The availability of ape “actors” has decreased (today only 2 chimps are “working”)
- The culture is changing and there is more awareness that chimpanzees are highly intelligent and complex animals. Less approval in general of the use of wild animals in entertainment (see Ringling Bros., SeaWorld – Blackfish effect)

After learning about the plight of great apes, the majority of ad agencies worldwide adopted policies that prohibit the use of great apes in their advertisements. This progress has taken place over the last 8 years.

Some examples are BBDO, McCann Erickson, JWT, Leo Burnett, Grey Group… etc.

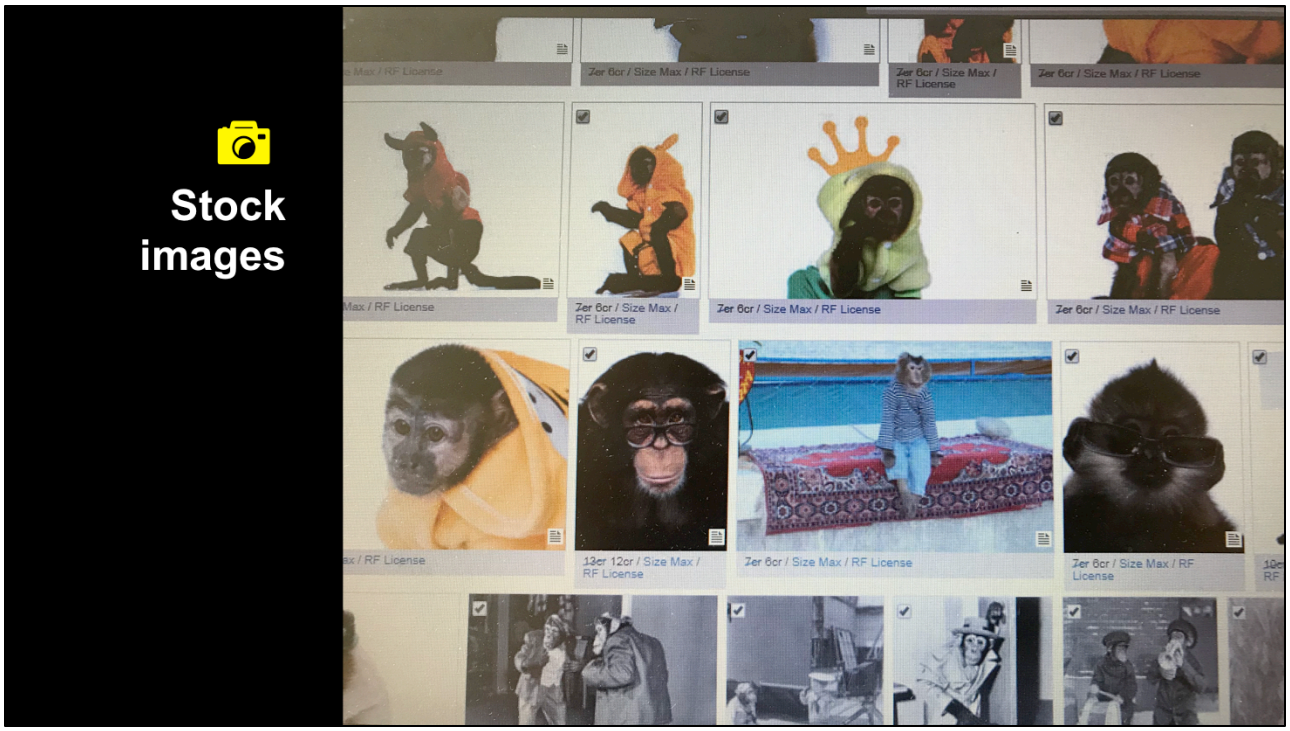
Monkeys in media in the U.S.

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	Total
Film	0	3	4	2	3	4	3	4	1	1	25
TV	2	2	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	X	18
Ads	1	1	3	7	4	9 (-1)	4	2	8 (-1)	4	43 (-2)

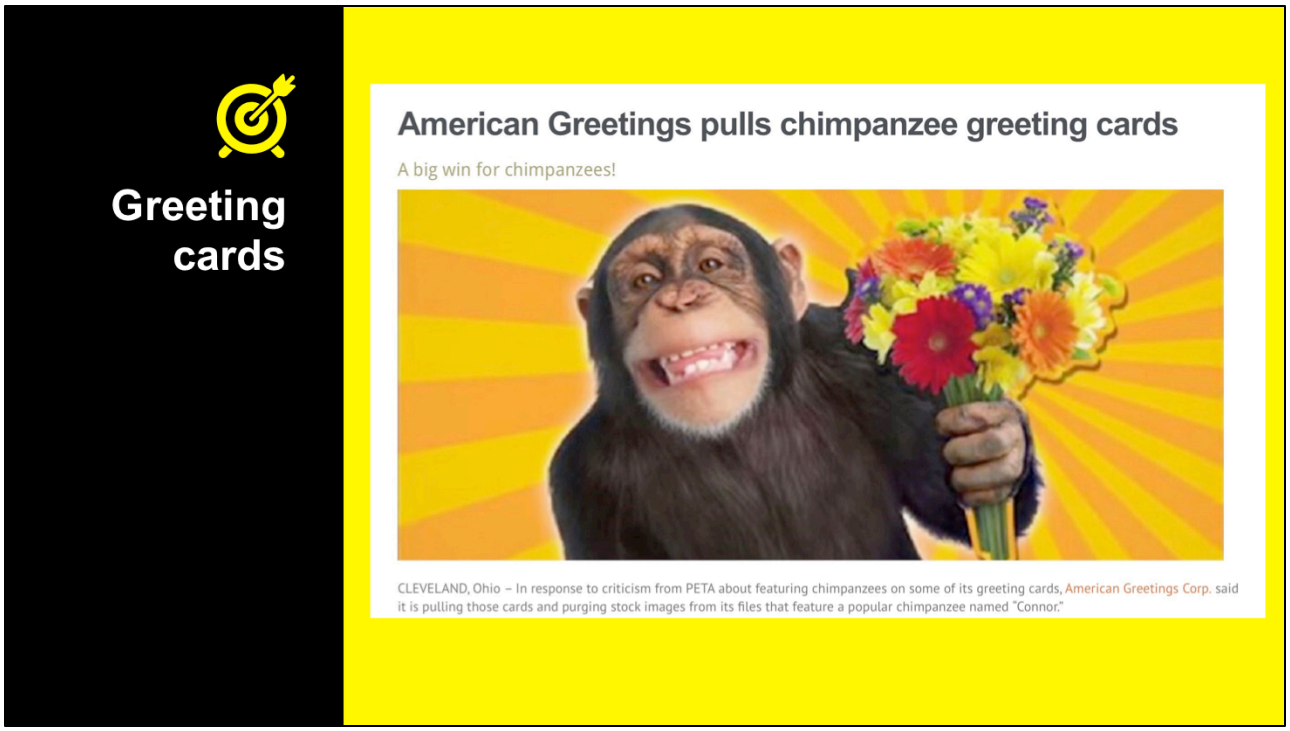
This is a chart showing use of monkeys. Please note that this is a conservative estimate.

Comparing use of chimps and monkeys:

- Film: 3 vs. 25 - monkeys were used more in film)
- TV: 23 vs. 18 - chimps were used more in TV - but monkey numbers to not include countless appearances of baby monkeys on morning shows
- Ads: 40 vs. 43 - monkeys were used more in ads. Less ads pulled



Now some positive news. Over the last several months some of the biggest stock photo agencies have changed policies regarding the kinds of images they will offer on their sites, and have implemented guidelines for the use of many images – moving them from commercial use to editorial-use-only. Most will no longer accept any photos of NHPs that were shot in studios



The greeting card industry is one of the worst culprits in perpetuating these harmful images. The card companies are not actively shooting new images of great apes – they use old images over and over.

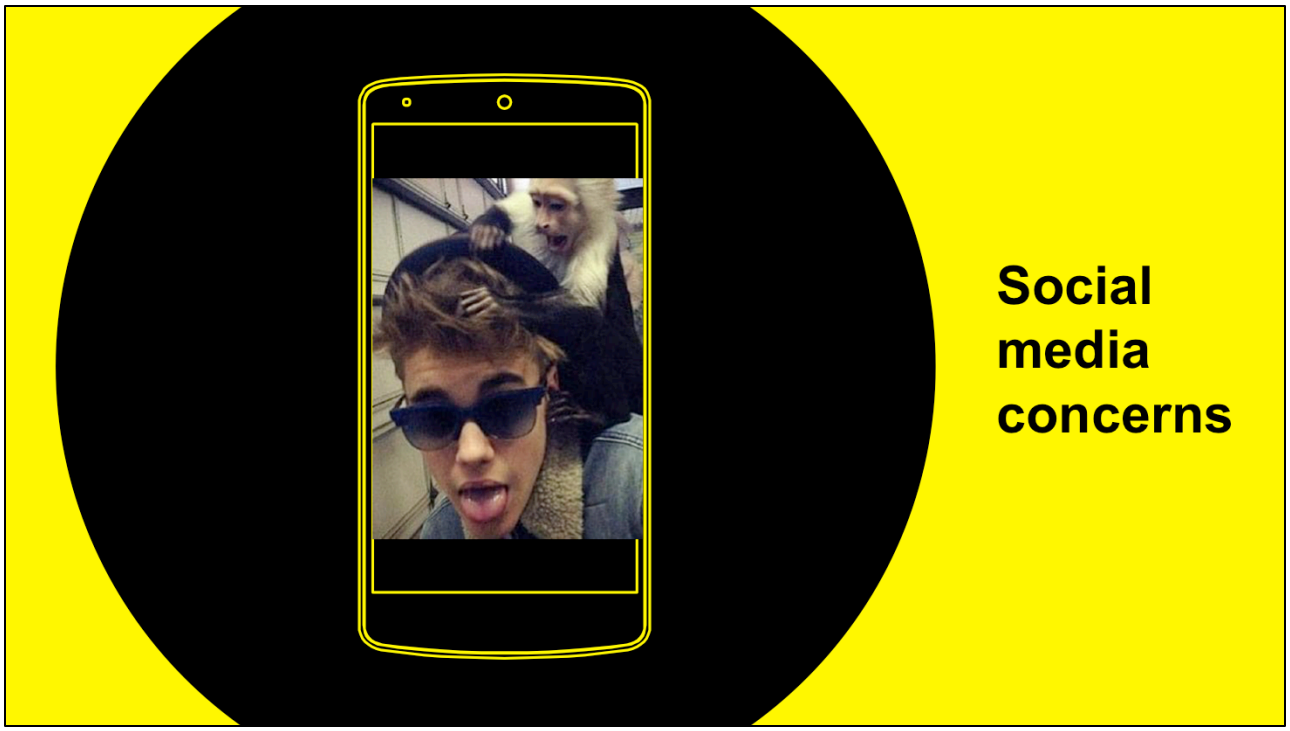
We did have some progress recently with the American Greetings, one of the 2 largest greeting card companies in the U.S. (the other being Hallmark).

Dozens of their card designs featured a chimpanzee named Connor who is now an adult and living at the Missouri Primate Foundation.

When PETA contacted AG about Connor, they agreed to retire all of the card designs that feature him. They also committed to not creating new cards featuring chimpanzee images. But they continue to sell several designs featuring other chimpanzees, as well as inappropriate images of orangutans and monkeys.

We also contacted Hallmark, but they have never directly responded to our concerns.

I'm hopeful that recent progress with the stock-image industry will eventually influence the greeting card industry to follow suit.



I would be remiss not to mention the selfies posted on Instagram, Twitter and other social media platforms, often by celebrities. These images bolster the pet trade and encourage their use in entertainment. These kinds of posts seem to be more and more frequent.

We have seen images of people posing with their own “pets” – such as Justin Bieber and Chris Brown. (Capuchin monkeys in both cases)

We have seen celebrities like Beyonce, Paris Hilton, Kloe Kardashian, posing with baby chimpanzees and orangutans.

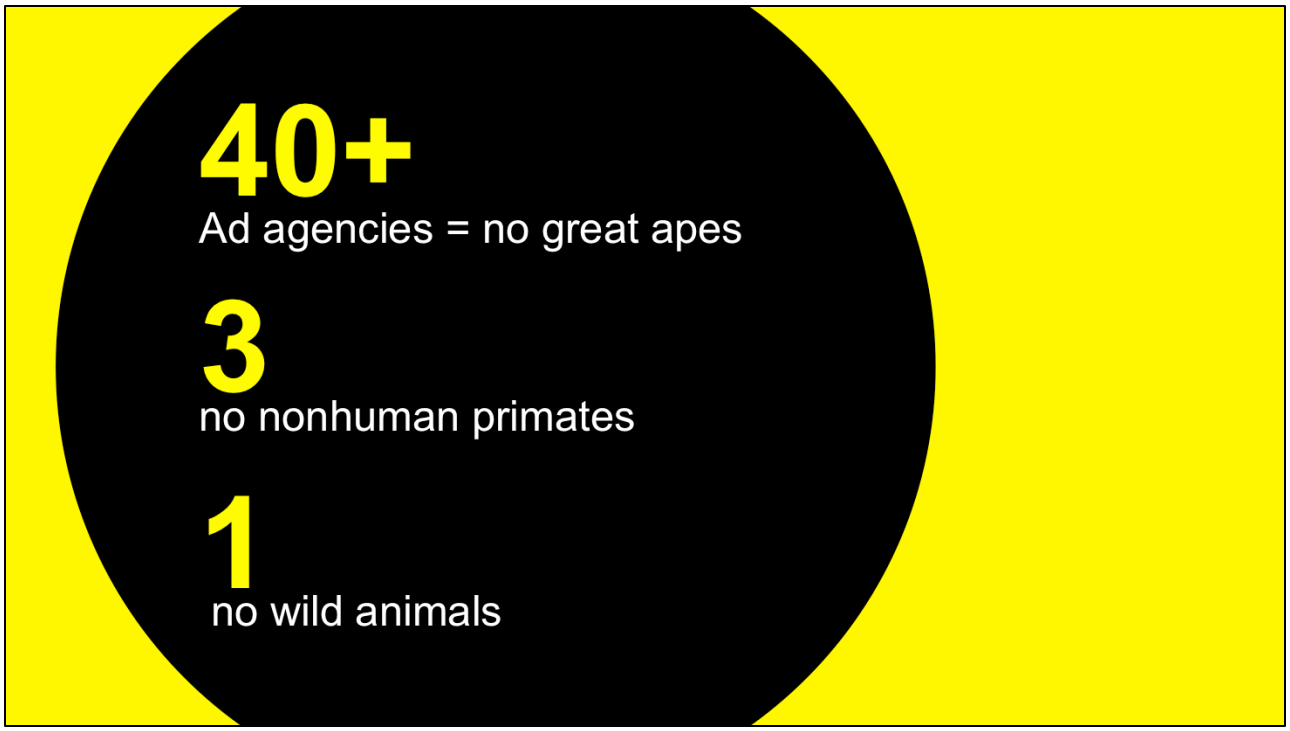
The reach of these celebrities is huge, and these images impact how people view our relationship to primates. If you look at the comments from the public on these posts, we see many comments about how great it would be to have a monkey or a chimp as a pet.

As stated previously, inappropriate images of primates contribute to the misconception that primates can be pets, and they can hinder conservation efforts as well. I want to take this opportunity to ask sanctuaries to be mindful of the images they post on their social media feeds.

Images posted by sanctuaries are problematic when they depict humans in close contact with primates, such as sick or young primates being handled. To the naive viewer, who doesn't understand the context, these look like images of "pets."

Sanctuaries can help by avoiding posting images that could be construed as depicting NHPs as human caricatures or clowns. I.E. wearing sunglasses, hats, boots. WE know that these are enrichment items, and that the animals are not posed or forced to wear them. But we have to think about the message that the public receives when they view the images.

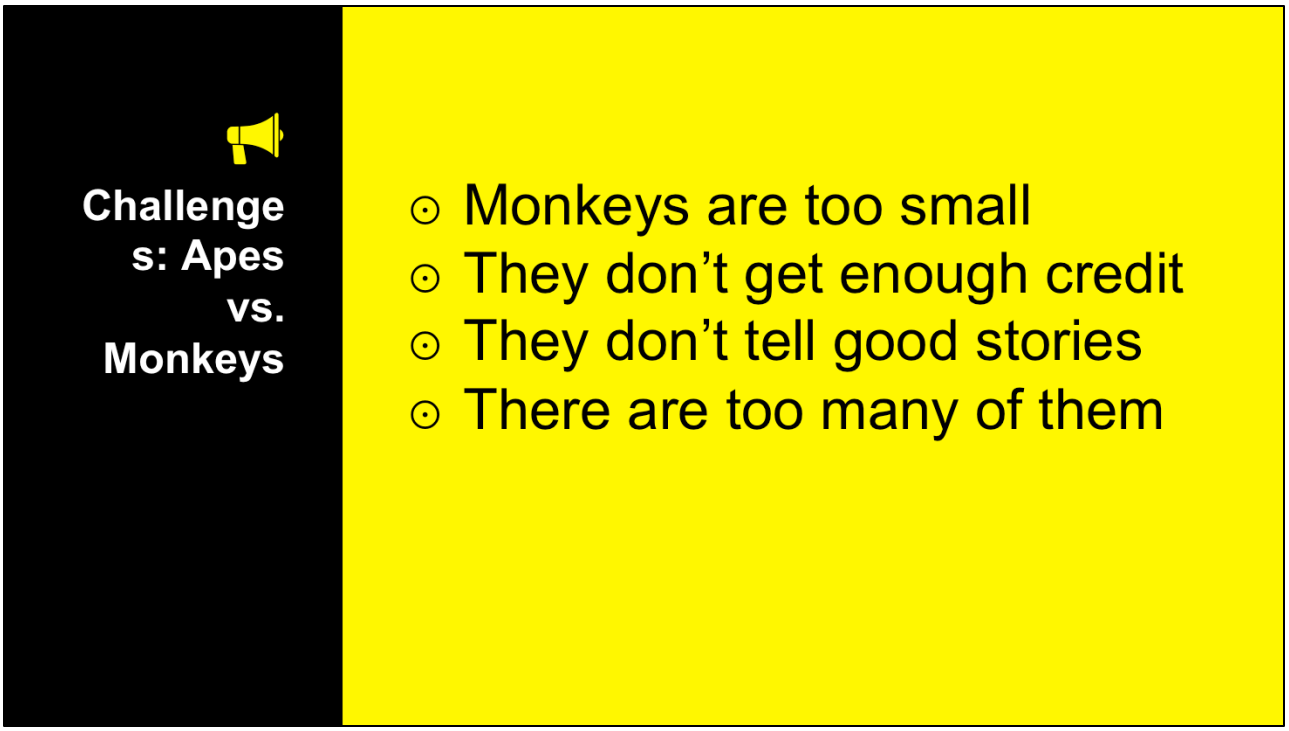
Don't rely on captions to contextualize photos. Your loyal followers and fans of your sanctuary may read the captions, but many people will not. And that means we can inadvertently reinforce messages about primates that actually counter our missions.



Regarding commercials, why have we made so much progress with great apes, but not monkeys?

I have found that it's more difficult to create *EFFECTIVE* advocacy messages for monkeys. In a way, chimpanzees have been a low-hanging fruit when it comes to the use of animals in entertainment.

I've thought about the reasons why, and this is what I've come up with…



1. Public seems to be less interested in/sympathetic towards the smaller primates. Unlike chimpanzees and orangutans, they are not "charismatic megafauna," which means they have less emotional appeal to humans than the great apes

2. As we all know, monkeys are highly intelligent, creative, and interesting. But the public is not as aware of these qualities, as compared to chimpanzees. Also, chimpanzees are our "closest genetic relative" so they get a lot of credit for that.

3. Unlike with chimps, there's no reliable documentation of physical abuse of monkeys during training, and some monkeys "work" into adulthood; they aren't necessarily retired at a young age as is common with chimps. So, the stories of their lives in the industry are less grim. It's more difficult to paint a picture that invokes the public's sympathy.

4. Most monkey species used for entertainment are not endangered, so conservation arguments are less relevant

Conclusions

- The use of great apes in entertainment seems to be reaching an end. We can celebrate that and focus our attention on monkeys

- As captive-monkey issues draw more attention we must develop stronger advocacy messages. Strongest messages will likely be tied to arguments against their use as “pets” – and the growing awareness that wild animals belong in the wild – and we can continue to build upon that.