



May 16, 2019

Robin Schwartz
Via email: Robin@RobinSchwartz.net

Dear Ms. Schwartz,

We have been approached by followers concerned with the representation of exotic animals in your photography, such as your "Amelia and Emily & Babie" series. Although you may not realize it, photos like yours serve to condone primate exploitation in the pet trade.

We recognize that you began taking photos to illustrate your young daughter's love of wildlife, but cultural preferences have since shifted and it is well known that encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals is harmful and dangerous to all involved. The source of the primates you photograph is unclear, but the facilities or private owners who loan out their primates for this purpose are not keeping the welfare of the animals as the top priority. The simple fact that animals are not living in social groups with other monkeys, have had their teeth removed, are forced to wear clothing, and perform on cue in disorienting environments is reason enough to raise animal welfare concerns. Training and living conditions for animal "actors" can be incredibly stressful and even abusive. Though your website says Emily and Babie are "rescued", reputable primate sanctuaries would never permit hands-on contact between their animals and a member of the public due to risks of disease transfer, injury from attack, and more. As experts in the field of primate care, we implore you to reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of animals.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 800 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as pets or entertainers.

NAPSA members are contacted constantly by people who – perhaps because they saw photos of cute monkeys or apes on social media – purchased a primate and then lived to regret it. Sanctuaries are overwhelmed with requests to house "pet" primates, and so it is a mission of NAPSA that we reach out to those who, often unknowingly, encourage primate exploitation.

Attached is NAPSA's position statement on the private ownership of primates, the use of primates in entertainment, and an educational resource on how to differentiate true sanctuaries from exploitive facilities. Your work has the power to influence many, so we encourage you to please reconsider such imagery, and promote empathy instead of harm.

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury
Program Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
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Visit our website at www.PrimateSanctuaries.org



Advocacy Position Statement Performing Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the use of trained primates for entertainment. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask the public not to support public events featuring trained monkeys and apes.

While such performances may seem amusing on the surface, the primates used in these spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many animal rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that primates are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough to avoid such events.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are exploited for entertainment. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – years before they would naturally separate. They are trained using methods that intimidate and inhibit their innate behaviors. Even then, the intelligence and unpredictable nature of these wild animals means that they often can only be used for a short time as actors before they become too independent, unmanageable, and dangerous. Primates are then deemed useless to the entertainment industry, and sold into situations that range from uncomfortable to downright harmful. The lucky ones are able to spend the remaining years of their life in a primate sanctuary.

NAPSA is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 800 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how primates are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

For more information:

["The Use of Primate "Actors" in Feature Films 1990–2013," Brooke Catherine Aldrich](#)

["Apes in Media and Commercial Performances," Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#)

["Bengals Shocking Half-Time 'Cowboy Monkey' Has a Cruel History," The Dodo](#)

["Chimpanzees in Entertainment," ChimpCARE](#)

["Apes in Entertainment," Jane Goodall Institute Australia](#)

["Opposition to the Use of Nonhuman Primates in the Media," International Primatological Society](#)

["Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees \(Pan Troglodytes\) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults," S.L. Jacobson et al.](#)

["Impact of Visual Context on Public Perceptions of Non-Human Primate Performers," K. A. Leighty et al.](#)



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:

["Legislative Recommendations to Prohibit the Possession, Sale, Breeding, Import, or Transfer 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

["Private Ownership of Nonhuman Primates,"](#) International Primatological Society

["Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees \(Pan Troglodytes\) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults,"](#) S.L. Jacobson, H.D. Freeman, R.M. Santymire, S.R. Ross

["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 800 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.

For more information:

"Roadside Zoos and Pseudo-Sanctuaries," Eyes on Apes