



July 15, 2019

Joshua Espinoza  
Complex News  
Sent via Twitter

Dear Mr. Espinoza,

A recent [Complex News Presents](#) video focused on the problems inherent in the exotic pet trade. While this is a very important topic (one that is [a major focus](#) of our advocacy work, in fact) we were disappointed to see that your piece highlighted a facility that is decidedly *not* a reputable sanctuary due to its unabashed use of animals for entertainment purposes.

The director of Animal Tracks Inc. shared messaging that is consistent with that usually shared by sanctuaries, including the reasons why exotic animals can never be domesticated and do not make good pets. However, permitting public contact with sanctuary animals, and diapering and leashing them – both of which appear to be common practices at Animal Tracks Inc. - is very much frowned upon by experts and actually will encourage people to pursue seeking exotic pets!

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of eight of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for close to 800 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as pets or entertainers. Attacks, injuries and disease transmission are just a few of the reasons why true sanctuaries never permit public contact with their animals. [Data shows](#) that elevated primate stress levels directly correlate to the amount of human contact they have experienced in their lifetime. This stress does not dissipate over time. The type of “education” that Animal Tracks provides, including public handling of exotic animals both at in-person events and through the media, [has been proven](#) to be ineffective and to negatively impact public perception of these species’ welfare and conservation. These practices shown by Animal Tracks, as well as their encouraging “selfies” with exotic species, contradict what sanctuaries are all about. So you may learn more, our advocacy documents on the use of primates in entertainment and on how to identify reputable animal care facilities are attached.

We applaud the intent of your article, but irresponsible treatment of exotic animals should never be promoted. Complex News has the power to reach many people with your content; We hope you will reconsider the message you spread with your articles. Please delete this video and consider an investigative report on the truth behind pseudo-sanctuaries. We invite you to film at our member sanctuaries so that you can show how true sanctuaries are able to meet the highest standards of animal welfare while also educating the public in appropriate ways.

Sincerely,

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

Erika Fleury  
Program Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
1000 Broadway ♦ Suite 480 ♦ Oakland, CA 94607

Visit our website at [www.PrimateSanctuaries.org](http://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 eight of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for close to 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.](#)



## **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