

The Humane Society  
of the United States

# Special Report On Zoos

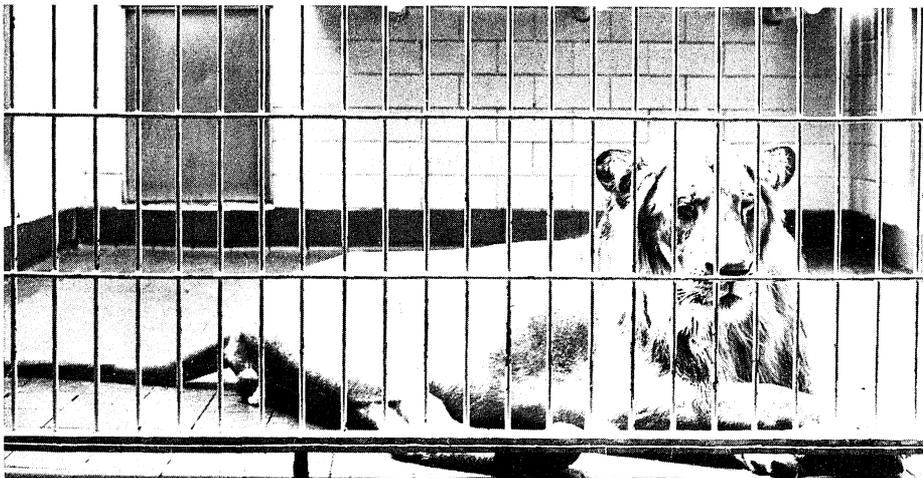
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In many ways, The Humane Society has become the Ralph Nader of the zoo world.

No American institution has been analyzed, criticized, and debated more in the past 12 months than the zoo, and The Humane Society of the United States can take almost total credit for initiating it.

Until HSUS zoologist Sue Pressman conducted an investigation of zoos in 1971 and declared many of them to be “nothing more than ghettos for animals,” most Americans never thought to question zoo conditions or concepts. But the publication of Mrs. Pressman’s findings in Jack Anderson’s syndicated column last July touched off a concern about zoos throughout the nation that continues to build momentum. Since then zoos have been the subject of analysis and debate in hundreds of local newspapers, on network radio and television, and in national publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Town and Country*, and *Cosmopolitan*.

In the course of its investigation, HSUS found a chimpanzee manacled to the bars of its tiny cage, an alligator trapped in a pool the size of a bathtub, 14 lions in one cage, and a bear huddled in a packing crate for shelter.



Animals need more than cleanliness. What can anyone learn about the characteristics of a lion while it is living in a ceramic-brick cell such as this?

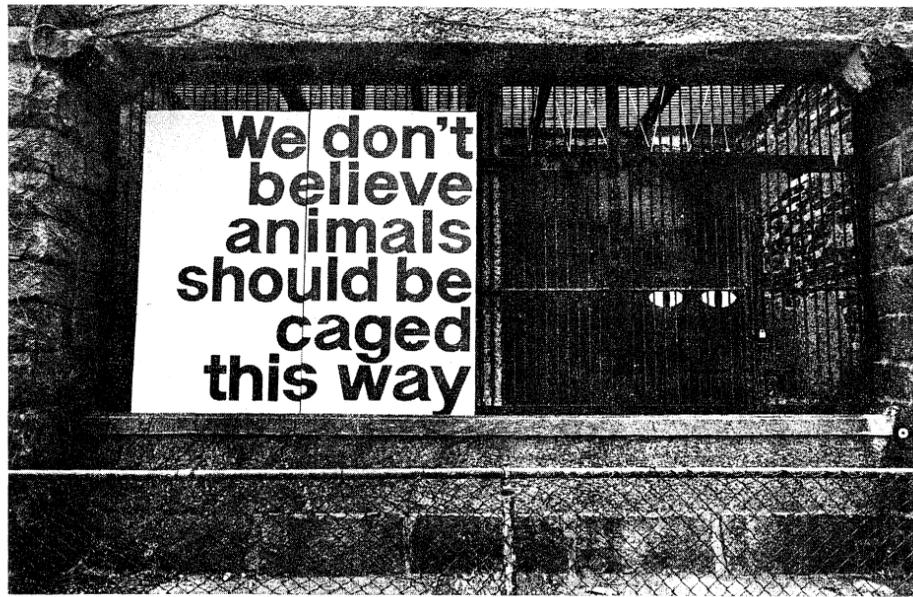
But the obviously bad conditions are few. Most of the problems HSUS uncovered had to do with the concept of exhibiting animals. Some 80 to 90% of the zoos were merely displaying “stamp collections,” exhibiting one or two of everything, in quarters so small and bland that no visitor could ever learn anything about the living habits of the animals.

As a result of HSUS's investigation, municipal government officials are turning their attention to long-neglected zoo facilities and staff deficiencies. The New Orleans and Tucson zoos, for instance, now have professional directors for the first time. Several communities have appropriated money for new animal quarters and renovations that had been requested for many years.

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One of the most encouraging results has been the increased awareness within the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums of the need to exert more leadership in changing the American zoo. AAZPA officials have welcomed HSUS's criticisms and urged their members to work with HSUS to improve all zoos in the United States.

The Humane Society's thrust has also placed it in an ideal



The Franklin Park Zoo in Boston posted this sign on an old, wire-mesh cage a few weeks before the trial. The picture is HSUS's. Approval of why

position to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in enforcing provisions of the new Animal Welfare Act that pertain to zoos and other animal exhibitions. By giving USDA the benefit of its findings, HSUS is able to supplement the small staff provided by enforcement appropriations.

In many ways, The Humane Society has become the Ralph Nader of the zoo world, spurring into action the individuals or municipalities who own zoos, the staffs who operate them, the taxpayers who are in the end re-

sponsible for their existence, and the federal officials who are now required to ensure that they meet certain standards.

Since her initial investigations early in 1971, Mrs. Pressman has continued to investigate both municipal and commercial zoos, having visited some 120 zoos in the 16 months she has been on the HSUS staff. She has met with city officials and advisory committees of several zoos that she has cited for poor conditions, to assist them in analyzing their objectives for displaying animals.

The Humane Society's attention has been turning more and more to drive-through zoos as their popularity encourages animal handlers and investors alike to get into the business.

HSUS is very much in favor of the natural habitat environment upon which a drive-through zoo



Drive-through zoos provide an opportunity to see an animal as they would be in a natural habitat, and to see the animal in its natural habitat. The picture is HSUS's. Approval of why

is based, but there is much more to an animal exhibition than having it look like an African landscape.

As with any other type of zoo, Mrs. Pressman points out, the drive-through zoo's primary purpose must be education. It offers a perfect means of teaching visitors the social order of species, by showing the animals together who live together in their natural habitat. But not all drive-throughs are taking advantage of this opportunity, she said.

"Frankly, I think most of them have been getting away with murder," Mrs. Pressman said. "They simply haven't been doing a good educational job."

She points out that drive-through promoters are doing nothing to replenish the stock of animals they're taking from their native habitats. In addition, the immense amount of land needed for drive-through zoos results in

many American animals being driven from their habitat.

A special characteristic of the drive-through zoos now in existence is that all are commercial enterprises, and because of the immense development costs, all future ones are apt to be, also. Although HSUS recognizes that commercial zoos can do a good job of educating the public about



Courtesy Tony Rankin

animals and caring for them, their motivation must, by necessity, be to make a profit.

The oldest drive-through zoos in the United States, Lion Country Safari, have received considerable criticism lately for what appears to be a lack of sensitivity about the welfare of the animals. As a result of charges of improper caging and inadequate health care leveled at the West Palm Beach, Fla., operation by the Miami *Herald*, HSUS investigated the park last month and found serious abuses and inadequacies that would not be obvious to most visitors. These were the major findings:

Staff members need to be more experienced in the care, treatment, and management of wild animals in captivity.

A full-time veterinarian should be on the premises, instead of the part-time one now employed.

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# As long as there is one animal caged without an educational purpose, The Humane Society and all humanitarians have work to do.

• The polluted water from a nearby canal is unsuited for the animals to drink.

• Cages used to house lions during nighttime hours are too small, have no running water, and are in poor condition. No isolation cages are available for sick, injured, or pregnant animals.

HSUS has requested that Lion Country Safari make the necessary improvements promptly, pointing out that several of the discrepancies are covered by the Animal Welfare Act of 1970, which became effective last December.

"We are in the business of investigating zoos solely for the purpose of improving the welfare of animals and their educational value to the public," said HSUS President John A. Hoyt. "We will gladly work with any zoo, public or private, that is willing to consider better means of operation."

When Mrs. Pressman joined the HSUS staff in March, 1971, she said that zoos had been able to go year after year doing the same thing without questioning their purpose. Largely because of her efforts on behalf of HSUS, she can no longer make that

statement. News clippings and letters come in to HSUS Washington, D.C., headquarters almost every week announcing the firing of a zoo director for incompetence, the closing of a zoo that had been criticized, or the struggle of concerned citizens to change the leadership and improve the conditions of their zoo.

But The Humane Society is the first to say that the struggle has only begun.

"For the first time people are questioning the purpose of their zoos," Mr. Hoyt said. "But the questioning must result in bold, positive action."

And there are aspects of ani-

mal exhibition that have yet to be dealt with. The animal dealers who supply zoos have always been privileged to privacy from the eyes of the public. But they must be examined carefully, and their coverage by the Animal Welfare Act of 1970 makes that project an imminent one for HSUS. Not covered by the act are all sea mammals in exhibitions, including zoos and aquariums. HSUS is determined to get the law extended to cover them.

As long as there is one animal caged without an educational purpose, The Humane Society and all humanitarians have work to do.



What visitor could help but learn something about zebras when seeing them in a zoo environment such as this? HSUS is working to provide this opportunity for more Americans.