**Arguments For Zoos**

By bringing people and animals together, zoos educate the public and foster an appreciation of the animals. This exposure and education motivate people to protect the animals. Zoos save [endangered species](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-are-endangered-species-129927) by bringing them into a safe environment, where they are protected from poachers, habitat loss, starvation, and predators.

Many zoos also have breeding programs for endangered species. A good zoo provides an enriched habitat in which the animals are never bored, are well cared for, and have plenty of space. Zoos are a tradition, and a visit to a zoo is a wholesome, family activity. Seeing an animal in person is a much more personal and more memorable experience than seeing that animal in a nature documentary.

Some would argue that humans have little, if any duty to non-human animals because humans are more important, and if keeping animals in zoos serves any educational or entertainment purposes, it serves a purpose to the humans, even if that purpose is not beneficial for the animals.

Some zoos help rehabilitate wildlife and take in exotic pets that people no longer want or are no longer able to care for. Both accredited and unaccredited animal exhibitors are regulated by the federal [**Animal Welfare Act**](https://www.thoughtco.com/overview-of-the-animal-welfare-act-127546), which establishes standards for care.

**Arguments Against Zoos**

From an animal rights standpoint, we do not have a right to breed, capture and confine other animals, [even if they are endangered](https://www.thoughtco.com/should-zoos-keep-endangered-species-127862). Animals in captivity suffer from stress, boredom, and confinement.

The vast majority of captive breeding programs do not release animals back into the wild. If people want to see wild animals in real life, they can observe wildlife in the wild or visit a sanctuary. A true sanctuary does not buy, sell, or breed animals, but takes in unwanted exotic pets, surplus animals from zoos or injured wildlife that can no longer survive in the wild.

If zoos are teaching children anything, it's that imprisoning animals for our own entertainment is acceptable. The argument that children will have more compassion animals they can see life does not hold water. Not one of today's children has ever seen a dinosaur, yet kids are crazy about them. At least one study has shown that elephants kept in zoos do not live as long as elephants in the wild.

The federal Animal Welfare Act establishes only the most minimal standards for cage size, shelter, health care, ventilation, fencing, food, and water. For example, [enclosures must provide](https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/9/3.128) "sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement. Inadequate space may be indicated by evidence of malnutrition, poor condition, debility, stress, or abnormal behavior patterns."

Sanctuaries also rehabilitate wildlife and take in unwanted exotic pets, without breeding, buying and selling animals like zoos do. Animals sometimes escape their enclosures, endangering themselves as well as people. There have even been incidents of zoo animals eating other zoo animals.