



## Can Wild Animals Be Kept As Pets?

**A**s a principle, The Humane Society of the United States/ Humane Society International strongly opposes the keeping of exotic and nondomestic animals (wild animals) as pets.

Appropriate care for wild animals requires considerable expertise, specialized facilities, and total dedication to the animals' needs. When wild animals are kept as pets, their lives are likely to be filled with misery. Often they languish in a cramped backyard cage or circle endlessly in a cat carrier or aquarium. Their suffering may begin with capture—every year millions of birds and reptiles suffer and die on the journey from their habitat to the pet store. The wild-pet trade threatens the very existence of some species.

With few exceptions, wild animals are difficult or impossible to care for. They often grow to be larger, stronger, and more dangerous than owners expect or can manage. Their nutritional and social needs are generally unknown, and recognizing

medical problems is difficult for the untrained individual. They can even pose a danger to human health and safety through disease and parasites.

Wild animals are not domesticated simply by being captive-born or hand raised by a human "mother." It's a different story with dogs and cats, who were domesticated thousands of years ago. These special animal companions depend on humans for food, shelter, veterinary care, and affection. Wild animals, by nature self-sufficient, fare best without our interference. As any animal matures, the need for a mother ends and the instinctual behavior of the adult animal replaces the dependent behavior of the baby or juvenile. Inevitably, the cuddly baby wild animal becomes an aggressive biter or displays destructive and seemingly temperamental behavior without provocation or warning. Such an animal has become a problem and is either neglected, passed from owner to owner, or disposed of in other ways.

Owning any animal means being responsible for providing appropriate and humane care. Where wild animals are concerned, meeting this responsibility is usually impossible; invariably it is the animals who suffer.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SCHAFER/TONY STONE IMAGES

For further  
information on  
wildlife issues, contact  
The Humane Society of  
the United States,  
2100 L St., NW,  
Washington, DC 20037.  
202-452-1100  
[www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

**Promoting the  
Protection of  
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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
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