

THE ZOO DEBATE

BY PHILIPPA WERRY



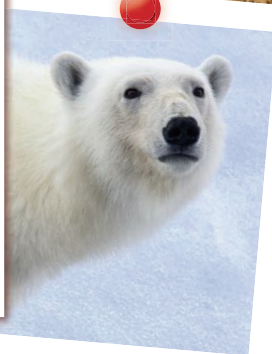
Kea



Lion



Orangutan



Polar bear

It's not always easy to see wild animals in their natural environment (the places where they usually live). Some wild animals are big and dangerous. Others are shy and hide from people. Some animals live in places that are difficult to get to, such as high in the mountains. Others are hard to find because there are not many left alive. But you can see some of these wild animals up close if you go to a zoo.

THE HISTORY OF ZOOS

Zoos have been around for a very long time. Archaeologists have found the remains of a zoo in the ruins of a five-thousand-year-old Egyptian city.

New Zealand's first zoo opened in Wellington in 1906. It started with just one animal – a lion that had retired from a circus! Auckland Zoo opened sixteen years later with a few lions, bears, dogs, and wolves. It also had some vultures and an emu.

HOW ZOOS HAVE CHANGED

In the past, visitors came to zoos to see the animals, but they also came to be entertained. They could ride on elephants and watch chimpanzees have tea parties. Many zoos kept their animals in small, concrete cages. Most people didn't think about the fact that this meant most of the animals couldn't behave naturally.

Today's zoos are very different. The animals have much more room, and their **enclosures** are more like their natural environment. Zookeepers plan things for the animals to do so that they move around and stay healthy. Most zoos also spend money and time to protect **endangered** animals. Many zoos have staff who work in the wild, using their special skills to help save these animals and their habitats.



A postcard showing the entrance to Wellington Zoo in the 1920s



Wellington Zoo's first animal - a lion named King Dick

SHOULD WE HAVE ZOOS?

People have different views about what is best for wild animals and how they should be looked after.

Some people believe zoos are very important while other people think we don't need them at all.

ARGUMENTS FOR ZOOS

Zoos teach people about animals and their natural environments.

Zoos allow people to see animals they would never be able to see normally.

Zookeepers and zoo vets care for the animals and work hard to give them a happy life.

Zoos help us to find out more about wild animals and how to protect them.

Zoos have special **breeding programmes** to help save endangered animals.

Zoos teach people to respect and love wild animals.

Zoos support **conservation** across the world.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST ZOOS

People can learn just as much about animals from books or television documentaries.

Most animals from breeding programmes stay in the zoo - they will never be put back into their natural environment, so the number of wild animals does not increase.

Some animals in zoos can get bored and lonely.

Animals don't belong in zoos - they have the right to be free.

Some zoos only want to keep big animals like elephants and tigers (because they are what visitors want to see) and not smaller, less exciting animals.

It costs a lot of money to keep animals in zoos.

Anjalee the Elephant

In 2015, an eight-year-old elephant named Anjalee arrived at Auckland Zoo. She came from an elephant orphanage in Sri Lanka to join the zoo's other elephant, Burma.

Zoo staff say Anjalee is thriving. They think that having elephants at the zoo is a good way to teach people about these amazing animals. And some of the money from zoo tickets is sent to Sri Lanka to help save elephants there.

But **animal rights groups** do not agree. They believe that elephants don't do well in zoos.



Burma and Anjalee

They say it costs more to take elephants across the world and keep them in zoos than to look after them in the wild in their own country.

Since Anjalee arrived, another elephant called Nandi (from the same orphanage) has been gifted to the zoo.

LISTENING TO BOTH SIDES

Karen Fifield is the chief executive of Wellington Zoo. She believes that zoos “inspire people to find out more about wildlife and the world we live in”.

Karen says that visiting a zoo is exciting, but it also helps people to learn about the natural world. She adds that good zoos care for their animals very well. The places where wild animals can live are getting fewer as the human population grows and animal habitats are destroyed. Zoos also support other organisations that work to protect wild animals in their natural environments.

Wellington Zoo is always looking for new ways to teach people about conservation, such as letting visitors watch animals being treated in the zoo hospital. “The vets have microphones and speak to our visitors while the animal is being treated,” Karen says. “People are able to ask questions. It’s an exciting and memorable way to learn about caring for animals. As well as treating zoo animals, the team helps a lot of injured wildlife too.”

Wellington Zoo's animal hospital



Alex Woodham works for the animal rights organisation SAFE (Save Animals From Exploitation). He feels that even the best zoos can't provide the right environment for animals that belong in the wild. He says, "Animals in zoos never behave naturally. They can't walk around freely, find their own food, or choose which animals they want to live with. And being on show can upset creatures that don't want to be seen by people."

"We don't need to imprison animals in zoos to learn more about them or to help in their conservation," he says. "Scientists who study animals in their natural environments learn far more about them than they do by studying those same animals in zoos."



Sanctuaries, Reserves, and Safari Parks

Most regular zoos keep animals in enclosures, but there are other ways to look after wild animals or to let people see them.

- Animal sanctuaries care for creatures that have been lost, hurt, or badly treated.
- Reserves are also safe places for birds and animals. Some reserves have high fences to keep predators out, and others are on offshore islands that predators can't reach.
- Marine reserves are areas where fish and sea creatures get special protection. People can swim and dive in the water, but fishing isn't allowed.
- Safari parks allow animals to roam freely over large areas, and people can see them as they drive through the parks in their cars.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A lot of the world's wild animals are endangered. If they're not protected, some species may die out completely. Most people think that we should protect endangered animals, but not everyone agrees that zoos are the best way to do this.



What do you think?

GLOSSARY

animal rights group - a group of people who believe that animals should not be used by humans but should be allowed the freedom to live natural lives

breeding programme - a plan to help an animal population increase by specially choosing the animals that will have babies (to make sure those babies are healthy and strong)

conservation - protection of animals, plants, and the natural environment

enclosure - an area with a fence around it

endangered - likely to become extinct (to die out)

The Zoo Debate

by Philippa Werry

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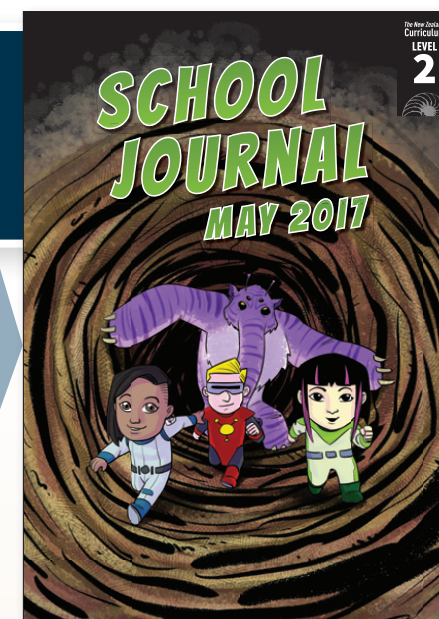
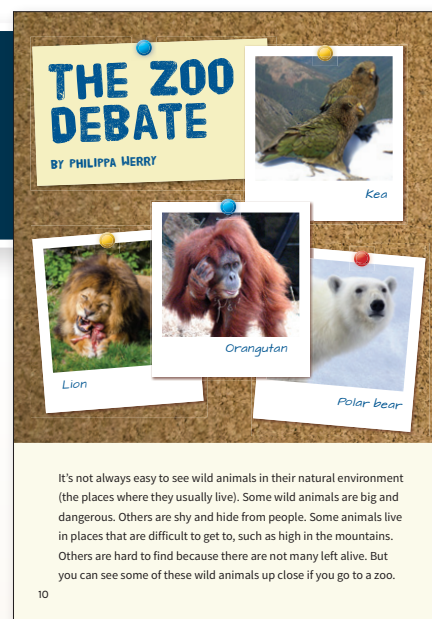
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