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Letters: Tigers should go extinct?

Vail CO, Colorado
July 23, 2007

It's not up to you
This is regarding your tiger farming article:

Since to you keeping tigers captive is a form of abuse and you rather see them extinct than saved through captive breeding, how do you feel about disabled people? Since their quality of life is not the same as that of a healthy person, should we just not treat badly injured or disabled people? Should we just let them die, because "almighty you" decided their quality of life is not worth living, the way you decided for tigers that they should go extinct rather than be saved through commercialization?

By the way, have you ever visited any of the Chinese breeding farms or are you just assuming it is a horrible place to be?

Zuzana Kukol

Lettr was written regarding this article:

<http://www.vaildaily.com/article/20070720/EDITS/70719043&SearchID=73289573969491>

Braunholtz: Death of the wild side

Alan Braunholtz
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July 20, 2007

Big predators have a charismatic fascination to small children and William Blake's lines — "Tyger, Tyger burning bright/In the forests of the night/What immortal hand or eye/Dare frame thy fearful symmetry" — long ago cemented tigers as the king pin of predators for me.

They also forever linked these handsome beasts to deep dark jungles. Tigers are a lot less awe-inspiring in a cage than a jungle. A tiger in a zoo is merely a pretty cat and a jungle without a tiger becomes a bunch of wet trees.

Same here where a forest without bears and mountain lions loses a lot of its chutzpah.

One argument for wolves in our wilderness areas is the woods would be wilder and edgier to be in. Heck everyone and their aunt wants more a “extreme” whatever these days from ski terrain to zip lines so why not a little more extreme wilderness? We can even go big and find a few grizzlies too!

Tigers are endangered and threatened by habitat loss and poaching. The main market for tiger parts is China, where they’re used in traditional medicines. There’s no scientific basis for their use, so get some Viagra instead, guys .

We all have this weird attitude toward wild, powerful animals. They impress us so we have to pet them, own them, wear them, eat them, and stick them on our walls, etc. as if that will give us their power. Instead it merely says we’re good at destroying things, something most 2-year-olds excel at.

Recently, China proposed reopening the trade in tiger parts because, to quote their department of wildlife conservation, “it will be a waste of resources if dead tigers are not used for traditional medicine.” And you thought our appointed officials in charge of protecting the environment were bad. Get ready for a lot of “accidentally” dead tigers.

A recent meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species thankfully rejected a Chinese proposal to raise captive tigers for trade. It’s easy to find horrible clips of indifferent workers skinning animals alive on the Internet in Chinese fur farms. The thought of something as iconic as a tiger being beaten into submission for sheer wild majesty and then dying horribly for a few snake oil dollars seems worse than what happens now to bears, dogs, cats, and foxes in these animal parts farms. It probably shouldn’t because they all suffer terribly and needlessly.

The argument that it’ll save the wild tigers from poaching doesn’t work. Instead it’ll open up the market. There may even be a premium paid for organic wild tigers. It’ll encourage belief in the use of these nonsensical traditional “cures” at the expense of the world’s endangered species. The Chinese seem to have a “last-chance-to-eat” fetish for rare animals. In May a ship abandoned off the coast contained 5,000 endangered animals of various types when searched.

If I had to choose between no tigers or wild tigers at the expense of thousands suffering in caged animal parts farms I’d have to go with no tigers. The guaranteed misery of tiger factories outweighs the ups and downs of a wild tiger’s life. My satisfaction is knowing they’re out there, the enjoyment of the idiots who buy tiger parts and the money made from the trade. The problem then is to explain the difference between tiger and pig factories without sounding like too much of a hypocrite or quoting William Blake.

China seems content with making a buck at any cost if their food scandals are any indication. We’ve had a little taste of it with the pet food and toothpaste recalls, but in China it’s commonplace with babies dying from knowingly tainted baby food and other regular fatalities. A world of profit without morals isn’t a nice place to live in. The Chinese government executed a high official in it’s Food and Drug Administration

for corruption, but it's hard to create morals from the top down especially when you ignore human rights abuses in other countries when its economically convenient. Western trade sanctions for genocide in Sudan and despotic oppression in Burma are seen as opportunities for easier business dealings to obtain those countries' resources.

Our massive consumption of the Earth's resources to fuel a wasteful lifestyle means we're destroying as much of the world as anyone, we're just not so in your face about it as say, tiger farms. It's hard for any person or country to preach to another, because we're all hypocritical to some extent. But just because someone's a hypocrite doesn't mean they're wrong. In fact, they probably can recognize their failings better than anyone. That's also why bear proof bins matter.

Alan Brauholtz of Vail writes a biweekly column for the Daily. Send comments or questions to editor@vaily.com.