

# The big debate

## Should all zoos be shut down?

A trip to the zoo is a great day out, but some people say they do more harm than good.

**CHEETAH ON THE LOOSE**  
On 12 March, a cheetah escaped from its enclosure at Port Lympne animal park. It was later enticed back with food. The zoo said the animal posed "no real threat".

### What you need to know

- There are hundreds of zoos, safari parks and other wildlife venues in the UK, attracting millions of visitors every year.
- By law, zoos in the UK must care for their animals properly, providing a suitable diet and environment, and protecting them from injury and disease. Zoos get inspected regularly and must have a special licence to stay open.
- Conservation is the protection of animals, plants and natural areas.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
London Zoo was founded for the study of animals in 1828. It opened to paying visitors in 1847 to cover the high cost of looking after the creatures.



Is it cruel to keep animals in captivity?

Inspectors recently reported that nearly 500 animals at a zoo in Cumbria – South Lakes Safari Zoo – died between 2013 and 2016. The animals died from causes including poor nutrition, illness and hypothermia (extreme cold). The zoo also failed to follow safety rules so that some creatures were injured, for example a tortoise was electrocuted by an electric fence and a lemur was killed after finding its way into a wolf enclosure. The authorities have now taken away the zoo's licence and a decision will be made in summer about whether it can remain open. Animal-welfare charities are calling for all zoos to be closed down because they say that this case is proof that zoos are not looking after their animals. Some people say that keeping wild animals in captivity is cruel even if they are treated well. Do you think zoos should be shut?

### Yes, zoos do more harm than good

We have no right to keep animals in captivity for our entertainment. Some zoos do not care for their animals properly and they are badly fed and kept in cramped conditions. Even if zoo animals are well looked after, they are still deprived of their natural environment and do not experience true freedom. They may not get the space or climate that they need and are not able to breed or hunt as they would in their natural habitat. It's not enjoyable for visitors to see magnificent animals in captivity, as they often show signs of stress and boredom, such as pacing up and down. Besides, we no longer need zoos to learn about animals. It's easy to watch fantastic programmes like *Planet Earth* or even travel to see animals in their natural habitat, which allows you to see them much closer up than in a zoo.

### No, zoos play an important role

Nowadays lots of zoos are about much more than entertainment. With many species at risk of extinction due to climate change and habitat loss, zoos play a vital role in conservation. Lots of zoos have breeding programmes for endangered species to increase their numbers, and they sometimes release the animals to the wild. What's more, a 2016 study by the University of Zurich showed that most mammals actually live longer in zoos than in the wild, because they are usually well looked after and aren't hunted by other animals. Going to zoos may be the only chance that many people get to see animals, as not everyone can afford to go on expensive wildlife holidays. The zoo gives visitors a greater understanding of animals, and may encourage people to protect them in the future.

GETTY IMAGES

### YES 3 reasons why zoos should be shut down

- 1 It's cruel to imprison animals for our own entertainment.
- 2 Animals in captivity can never live as they would in the wild. This can make them unhappy.
- 3 We no longer need zoos – if you want to see animals, you can watch a natural history documentary.

### NO 3 reasons why zoos should not be shut down

- 1 Zoos often carry out important conservation work – surely it is better to have animals in captivity than for them to become extinct.
- 2 Zoos are a good way to teach people about the importance and beauty of animals.
- 3 For lots of people, it's the only opportunity for people to see wild animals close up. That shouldn't be taken away from them.

### THE WEEKLY POLL

To find out what everyone is voting on this week visit:  
[theweekjunior.co.uk/polls](http://theweekjunior.co.uk/polls)



### What do you think?

Each week we ask our readers to vote in our The Big debate poll. You can find out what we're voting on at the moment by visiting [theweekjunior.co.uk/polls](http://theweekjunior.co.uk/polls).

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