

Animals in Zoos and Aquariums

On Point with Tom Ashbrook: “Killer Whales – Tanks and Tensions”

- The story of **Tilikum** and Dawn Brancheau
 - Are tragedies like this the only way that this kind of issue can get media attention (in this case, to the issue of ‘animals in captivity’ more generally)? What does this say about our media model more generally, and can you think of any means of improvement? (e.g., now that Deepwater seems at least partially ‘solved’, are we all going to forget about the potential risks of oil exploration again?)
 - And does it even make sense to speak of ‘psychotic’ orcas?

Randall L Eaton, “Orcas and Dolphins in Captivity”

- Is this fair?: We go to the zoo “to know why we feel wistful about being caged with the animals in civilization... [and that] the caged animal tells us that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way we and they live”?
- “Contrast what altogether constitutes the most complicated niche occupied by any organism in the world with its life in what is for it something less than a bathtub...even by zoo standards, the dolphins and orcas have miserable records in captivity”. (498) Measured how?
- What are the pros and cons of **public versus private zoos**? (499)

Dale Jamieson, “Against Zoos”

- Jamieson’s core argument is that Zoos’ various purposes—**preservation, research, amusement and education**—are fundamentally incompatible. What do you think? In urban zoos? Rural zoos? Generally?
- How can the oft-repeated line that “entertainments keep people interested, thus making education possible” lead organizations astray? What are some cases where this would be true? Where it would be false?
 - [Re. Kellert study] But “what is it we want people to learn from visiting zoos? Facts about the physiology and behavior of various animals? Attitudes towards the survival of endangered species? Compassion for the fate of all animals?” (508-9)
 - What are the pros and cons of behavioral research conducted at zoos? (509)
- What is Jamieson’s critique of using research (and breeding) as a general ‘defense’ of zoos? (510)
- “If zoos are like arks, then rare animals are like passengers on a voyage of the damned”
- The case of ‘**surplus animals**’

Michael Hutchins, Brandie Smith, and Ruth Allard, “In Defense of Zoos and Aquariums”

- Distinguishing **AZA**-accredited and unaccredited zoos (not to mention foreign zoos!): “Of the more than 2,300 animal exhibitors licensed by the USDA’s Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS), fewer than 10% are qualified to be AZA members.”
- “A 1992 Roper poll identified zoos and aquariums as the third most trusted messenger on wildlife conservation and environmental issues (trailing only National Geographic and Jacques Cousteau)”.
- Zoos role in supporting *in situ* (as against *ex situ*) conservation: “critics imply that zoos and aquariums are not active conservation organizations, because they are not releasing a steady stream of animals into the wild. This argument reflects an ignorance of the breadth, scope, and goals of conservation itself.” (515)
 - What percentage of zoo income do you think goes to conservation? In other words, is this real CSR, or mere **greenwashing**?
- “Animal rights advocates believe in the intrinsic rights of individual animals, whereas conservationists focus their attention on populations, species, and ecosystems...we believe that conservation is our highest priority.” We’ve seen this argument before...is there any middle ground to be found here?