



# Wildlife on a tightrope

An overview of wild animals  
in entertainment in Thailand



We were known as **WSPA**  
(World Society for the  
Protection of Animals)

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Cover image Elephant walking on tightropes

Unless otherwise stated, all images are World Animal Protection

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# Executive summary

## A life in tourist entertainment is no life for a wild animal

Across the world, and throughout Asia, wild animals are being taken from the wild, or bred in captivity, to be used in the tourism entertainment industry. They will suffer at every stage of this inherently cruel process and throughout their lives in captivity.

Wild animals taken from the wild, and from their mothers, are being forced to endure cruel and intensive training to make them perform, and to interact with people. They are living their whole lives in captive conditions that cannot meet their needs: a life in tourist entertainment is no life for a wild animal.

At World Animal Protection we are working to protect wild animals from cruelty, and to help keep them in the wild where they belong.

## Understanding the scale of suffering

This report highlights the findings of our 2010 research into the lives of captive wild animals used in tourism entertainment venues in Thailand – one of Asia’s most popular tourist destinations.

We assessed the scale of the wildlife tourism entertainment industry and reviewed how much, or how little regard for welfare was given to captive wild animals at entertainment venues.

We wanted this information to help governments, communities, local people and the tourism industry to understand the scale and extent of suffering endured by wild animals in tourism entertainment.

Since we carried out this assessment in 2010, it is likely the situation for captive wild animals may have changed or gotten worse - but this information has helped to lay the foundations for the work we continue to do today - to protect wild animals used in tourism entertainment.



## Scale of wildlife tourism entertainment in Thailand

We visited 118 venues across Thailand in 2010. These included venues offering wildlife tourism entertainment, and a number of animal rescue focused institutions.

In these venues we found 1,688 elephants; 614 tigers and 317 macaques.

Most venues offered elephant rides or elephant shows. But an increasing number were offering captive wild tigers for tourism entertainment.

A small number of larger venues housed all three species, and a mix of animals, including primates such as orang-utans and chimpanzees. These venues offered wildlife entertainment to large audiences.

Sixty four percent of venues housing captive wild elephants were small to medium sized. They held an average of one to 10 animals; making up 26% of the elephants in this study. The remaining elephants were kept in larger venues.



## Scale of animal suffering

- **Of the venues visited, 53% of those with captive elephants and 90% of those with captive tigers and macaques did not meet the basic needs of captive wild animals.**

- 41% of elephant venues offered slightly improved, but still inadequate captive conditions, for wild animals.
- Key welfare issues that lead to suffering in captive conditions were found to be:
  - extreme restraint, through being chained or caged, with limited freedom to move as they would in the wild
  - limited opportunity to naturally socialise with other animals as they would in the wild
  - participation in stressful and demanding activities, including interaction with people and performing in shows
  - non-existent or insufficient veterinary care
  - inadequate nutrition and diet for some captive wild animals
- Six captive wild elephant venues, ran by rescue organisations, had commendable animal welfare standards, and did not use captive wild elephants for entertainment.

- Only one venue housing captive wild tigers, and another with captive wild macaques, had commendable animal welfare standards.
- Captive wild elephant venues in north Thailand demonstrated a higher level of animal welfare standards than their counterparts in the south.
- There was an imbalance of male and female elephants and macaques: 69% female adult elephants and 67% male adult macaques in their respective venues. This suggested interference in the population, such as taking animals from the wild, or removing unwanted genders.
- Education on the importance of protecting wild animals was rare, with only 6% of wildlife entertainment tourism venues offering 'comprehensive education' at their venues.



**Image** A chained macaque at a tourist attraction in Thailand

## Keeping wild animals in the wild: next steps

There is clear evidence across Thailand, as well as in Asia and globally, of wild animals suffering in the tourism entertainment industry.

Wild animals belong, and can only live fully, in the wild. But, we know it will take time and collaboration to move towards an end to their use in tourism entertainment.

We are calling for a move towards sustainable, locally sensitive solutions to end the suffering of wild animals used in tourism entertainment.

To protect wild animals, with sustainable solutions, we are working alongside governments, tourist venues, communities and local people to ensure culture and livelihoods are considered.

We are opening conversations to help achieve lasting change for wild animals - to move away from exploitation to venues with animal welfare and protection at their core.

We are also raising awareness among tourists to ensure they make informed decisions and put animal welfare at the heart of their travel choices. We are encouraging them to view wild animals in their natural habitat, or to only visit venues where the best interests of captive wild animals are being met.

We work with governments, the tourism industry, tourist venues, and local partners, to develop sustainable, economically viable and animal-friendly solutions that protect wild animals.

Our aim is for national and local governments and the tourism industry to introduce policy measures that will ultimately phase out the wildlife entertainment industry and keep wild animals in the wild, where they belong.



# Animal welfare

## What is animal welfare?

Animal welfare is often viewed as how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. Animal welfare considers more than the level of health of the animal, it incorporates the physical (health, growth, reproduction) and psychological (how the animal perceives its environment and its emotional state) well-being of the animal, as well as its ability to express natural behaviours.

An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from pain, fear, or distress.

In the case of wild animals it is impossible to meet all of their welfare needs in captivity. Wild animals are (by very definition) undomesticated species, which have not undergone genetic changes in either appearance or behaviour which enables them to adapt readily to 'non-wild' captive conditions.

World Animal Protection believes that wild animals belong in the wild, as this is the only place they can lead full lives free from the suffering inherent with captivity.

## Wild animal needs can only be fully met in the wild

Wild animals belong in the wild. They have adapted perfectly to their environment. Their unique anatomy, physiology and behaviour has adapted over many generations to survive and thrive in their natural habitat.

In captivity, wild animal welfare is strongly dictated by how closely their living conditions resemble their wild natural environment.

Venues keeping captive wild animals, including rescue centres, tourism entertainment venues and zoos, are responsible for ensuring the best interests of those captive wild animals are being met.

**But, meeting the needs of captive wild animals, when they belong in the wild, is very challenging. For example:**

- their interaction with people should be limited or non-existent.
- the food provided to them should be fresh and resemble their natural diet.
- provision should be made allowing them to express their natural wild behaviour, such as roaming, foraging and interacting with each other, as they would in the wild.

Creating an environment for captive wild animals that replicates their natural environment in the wild is challenging and expensive. And despite the available research there is still a lot unknown about the needs of many wild animals.

In some venues captive wild animals do receive adequate nutrition and medical treatment. This can lead to the misconception that they are not suffering. But, good animal welfare requires more than just physical health. Mental wellbeing, and the impact of the environment in which animals live, is just as important.

Ultimately, the needs of wild animals, can only be fully met in the wild.

## Impact of inadequate care for captive wild animals

Captive wild animals suffer from being kept in inadequate welfare conditions, especially at tourism entertainment venues, that do not meet their needs.

Their welfare depends on venue owners having the appropriate knowledge and awareness of wild animal needs, and commitment to investing in their wellbeing.

Sadly, because wild animals are often seen as commodities, owners may feel it is simpler to replace them rather than investing in improvements to their welfare.

Captive wild animals kept in inadequate welfare conditions can develop psychological or neurological disorders, known as stereotypies. Stereotypies are defined as repetitive movements without clearly established purpose or function<sup>1</sup>.

Head bobbing to body rocking to self-mutilation. Once captive wild animals have developed neurological or psychological symptoms due to their needs not being met in captivity, they are very difficult to reverse. Symptoms can be in response to increased stress from confinement or from being left in isolation, with no stimulation or chance to move freely<sup>2</sup>. This stereotypical behaviour has only been observed in captive animals.

Captive wild animals can also develop disorders or injuries linked to malnutrition, harmful environments, neglect or harsh training methods. And those suffering in unacceptable living conditions are more likely to contract diseases, posing an infectious risk to tourists and people working with the animals<sup>3</sup>.

## Impact of using captive wild animals for entertainment

Wild animals taken from the wild, or bred in captivity, for the tourism industry not only live in unacceptable captive conditions, they also endure cruel and intensive training.

From elephant rides, to tigers being used in holiday photos, to macaques being forced to perform for tourists: wild animals will suffer at every stage of their captive lives.

For instance, all captive wild elephants go through an intense and stressful breaking-in process to accept having people ride on their necks and backs. Elephants can suffer daily pain and discomfort from being saddled, overburdened with heavy passengers, constant interaction with people and from being tired and overworked.

Captive wild animals used in shows and other entertainments usually endure severe discomfort from being forced to carry out extremely repetitive and limited behaviour patterns, while often subjected to stressful and painful training.

There are insufficient regulations in Thailand, and elsewhere, limiting captive wild animal working hours. And so to maximise profits many captive wild animals are forced to work long and stressful hours to entertain tourists, with little rest and recovery time between activities. Overworked animals are prone to illness and injury and may also become aggressive, often requiring forceful or severe handling by people to make them work.

Much of this abuse takes place behind the scenes and tourists are often unaware of how tired or stressed the animals really are.





Image A tiger at a tourism facility in Thailand

# Impact of captive breeding of wild animals

Captive breeding occurs in many larger venues in Thailand, particularly those that use captive wild elephants or tigers for tourism entertainment.

Many venues that breed wild animals for tourism entertainment claim they are addressing conservation concerns. But, an ever increasing captive tiger and elephant population does not benefit the conservation of wild populations.

Captive breeding for commercial purposes fuels the demand for wild animals – either to be used in tourism entertainment or for their products – by providing a market for illegally poached wild animals.

It can be more cost-efficient to capture wild animals rather than breed them<sup>4</sup>. While captive breeding can reduce the number of animals taken from the wild in the short term, in the longer term it feeds the demand for the wildlife trade - especially in situations with insufficient law enforcement in place to prevent poaching<sup>5</sup>.

This continues to risk the future of wild animals, especially critically endangered ones like elephants and tigers<sup>6</sup>.

This issue is compounded by the fact that there are few laws and enforcement that properly addresses the illegal wildlife trade. Plus the availability of legal captive-bred animals and their products makes it harder to distinguish between legal and illegal wild animal products.

For example in Thailand, the availability of legal ivory from captive wild elephants, on the domestic market, makes it easier for illegal ivory from Africa to be laundered, as it is impossible to tell the two products apart.

The best outcome of captive breeding would be the reintroduction of captive bred animals into the wild, where they belong. But, this is only possible with well-managed, scientific breeding programmes that prevent inbreeding or mixing of subspecies. Extensive efforts would also need to be made to prevent the introduction of new diseases into existing wild populations.

Even then, reintroducing wild animals is extremely challenging, and is often unsuccessful in effectively conserving populations, especially if habitat destruction and wildlife protection are not addressed<sup>7</sup>.

Some rescue centres and sanctuaries do take measures to prevent captive breeding. One advantage to this is it can help these facilities control the numbers of elephants they have in capacity, enabling them to take in captive wild animals in need, and to provide them the best possible welfare.

Unfortunately in some tourism entertainment venues, captive breeding continues purely for economic benefits, due to baby animals being a big draw for tourists.

Ultimately, captive breeding leads to more wild animals living their lives in captive conditions that cannot meet their needs; needs that can only be fully met in the wild.

# Wild animals in focus

Throughout Thailand and across Asia there are three wild animal species that are most commonly used in wild animal tourism entertainment:

**Asian elephants, tigers and macaques.**

Our assessment focused on the welfare conditions of these three species in venues across Thailand.







## Elephants: The facts

Adult Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) can weigh between 3,000 to 5,000kg and reach a body length of over six metres.

Together with their African counterpart, they form the largest land-based mammal family.

Asian elephants are highly intelligent and can live up to 70 years, although their lifespan in captivity is generally shorter<sup>8</sup>.

Asian elephants roam home ranges of between 15 to 30 square kilometres.

Every day, herds may travel up to 10km in thick forest and often steep terrain. Each elephant will normally consume between 150-300kg of food.

Females are extremely social animals, forming matriarchal herds of up to 20 other females and younger individuals.

Males are more solitary, but will temporarily join a female group or form temporary male groups.

Pregnant females have a gestation period of around 20 months. They take care of their offspring for the first four years, and continue to supervise them for several years after.

Elephant herd members constantly interact with each other, either through touch or vocally. This is essential to maintain their highly developed social network.

Elephants have a highly developed social instinct. They may mourn for a deceased animal, designate nannies and aunts to take care of offspring, and cooperate with each other.

Constant encroachment by people into elephant habitats, and the illegal trade of ivory and wild animals, has caused a rapid decline in the Asian elephant population over recent decades.

Asian elephants are considered endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2011).

Asian elephants are on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which heavily restricts international trade of animals and animal parts.

## The history of elephants in Thailand

Elephants have been used by people in Thailand for over 4,000 years. They have been used in wars and as working animals, and are one of Thailand's most recognised national symbols.

At the beginning of the 20th century there were a large numbers of elephants in the wild, and more than 100,000 captive elephants in Thailand. Today, around 2,500 elephants remain in the wild. The captive population is nearer 3,500<sup>9</sup>.

The loss of elephants in the wild is through destruction and fragmentation of natural habitat, poaching and conflict with people.

Previously, captive wild elephants in Thailand were mostly used in the logging industry. However, a state-wide ban on commercial forestry in 1989 left many captive elephant owners without an income. This led to captive elephants being used more for entertainment - for riding, in shows, and for street begging.

Until 2009, about 200 captive wild elephants were used for begging on the streets of Bangkok, until the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration succeeded in banning this practice. Though there were concerns for the future of these elephants, this showed a positive step in protecting captive wild elephants from living in the worst welfare conditions.

In contrast, captive wild elephants used in tourism entertainment in Thailand continue to suffer from being kept in captive conditions that cannot meet their needs. There are no guidelines in place to improve or contain the situation.

Elephants in Thailand are legally covered both by wildlife legislation, for elephants in the wild, and domestic livestock legislation, for captive elephants. This confusion, alongside an insufficient registration system for captive elephants, is not offering guidelines for the improvement of the welfare of captive wild elephants, or for preventing the illegal wildlife trade.

**Image** An elephant at a camp, where they are trained and perform, in Thailand

Our 2010 assessment focussed on the welfare conditions of captive wild elephants in venues across Thailand. There are also an estimated 1,400<sup>10</sup> captive wild elephants kept near their owners' villages or for illegal logging, that we could not assess.

## The mahout

Traditionally, captive wild elephants are cared for by mahouts. Over centuries they have gathered vast knowledge about traditional elephant keeping, and their relationships with their elephants can be close<sup>11</sup>. However, the relationship between captive wild elephants and their mahouts can be a difficult one. This is due to the loss of knowledge in younger generations, limited awareness of captive wild elephant needs, the increasing commercialisation of the industry, and the use of sometimes cruel methods of control.



## The myth of the domesticated elephant

Across Thailand, tourists will often come across signs indicating 'domesticated' elephants are being used for tourism entertainment purposes. However, elephants have never been domesticated. This statement is misleading. It indicates that elephants have lost their wild instinct and adapted to life in captivity.

The domestication process creates an animal that significantly differs from its wild counterpart, in anatomy and character because of generations of selective breeding by people.

A domesticated animal can still behave similarly to its wild counterpart, but response to activities that can trigger reactions such as stress, fear or aggression, have decreased. This makes a domesticated animal easier to handle. While it is not possible to say exactly how long a domestication process takes, it is generally accepted that domestication will not be achieved in fewer than 12 generations of selective breeding<sup>15</sup>.

Elephants have never undergone the domestication process. They have instead gone through what is described by authors on the subject as a classical example of taming and training<sup>16</sup>. They are not domesticated animals, classing them as such has impact on elephant protection and conservation.

In the 4,000 year history of people-elephant relationships, most elephants used by people have been directly taken from the wild. Even today, most captive adult wild elephants still originate from the wild. Elephants bred in captivity are mostly only first or second generation and have not been selectively bred – a prerequisite to domestication.

In Thailand today, it is estimated as many as 75% of captive adult elephants used for tourism entertainment have been taken directly from the wild although this figure is difficult to validate in absence of accessible databases.

The fact that people have used elephants for thousands of years does not mean they are domesticated. This is illustrated by the intense and cruel training that elephants endure so they can be handled safely.

## Defining captive wild elephants

Through its time in captivity, and through suffering intense training and interaction with people, an individual elephant's behaviour can undergo changes that might not always be reversible. Experts have suggested there could be a need for a definition that recognises the continuous nature of change from 'wild' to 'domesticated'.

There have also been discussions whether to refer to elephants as 'tamed' or 'captive wild animals'. 'Captive' can imply the animal has been captured directly from the wild, when many elephants have been born in captivity<sup>17</sup>, but it does recognise all elephants have the same needs, whether taken from the wild or captive bred. This is why in this report we refer to elephants as captive wild and domesticated elephants.

In Thailand today, it is estimated as many as **75%** of captive adult elephants used for tourism entertainment have been taken directly from the wild.

## Can wild elephants live in captivity?

Elephants are some of the most socially developed mammals in the world, and arrange their herds into a clear hierarchic structure. In captivity it is the mahout that takes on the dominant role through exerting control over the elephant. This is achieved sometimes through severe cruelty, and always through intense training and controlling the freedom and movement of the elephant. It clearly affects the welfare of the animal.

Most mahouts will reject the idea of giving their elephant more freedom, fearing it will challenge their dominance. Therefore elephants will be chained to control their unpredictable behaviour, to ensure they do not cause a risk to people and property, and to insure the livelihood of the mahout.

Many tourists who enjoy interacting with captive wild elephants, or watching them perform seemingly harmless acts such as painting, are not aware of the severe suffering that lies beneath.

Many tourists also incorrectly presume that elephants are docile animals. They are, however, one of the most dangerous wild animals to handle.

Those who have experienced working with captive elephants say for every male elephant in captivity there will be one person fatally injured. The number of people severely injured by captive wild elephants is estimated to be the highest rate among captive wild animals used by people. There are documented cases of people being killed and injured by elephants in Thailand.<sup>19</sup>

**“In the interest of public safety, the AZA strongly encourages its members to discontinue public elephant rides.”<sup>20</sup> The American Zoo Association (AZA).**

The ‘musth’ period, an annual phase of increased testosterone production in male elephants, causes the biggest issue in controlling captive wild elephants. During this period male elephants become unpredictable and often extremely aggressive. Even the most progressive elephant sanctuaries struggle with the management of male elephants during this period. They resort to chaining them in isolation during musth – which can last anything from three weeks to a few months.

Further evidence that elephant needs cannot be met in captivity is the limited reproductive success of captive wild elephants. Even with advancements in artificial insemination, the captive Asian elephant population globally is not self-sustaining. Consequently, animals continue to be taken from the wild<sup>21</sup>. While gender imbalance and diseases play a role, recent studies link poor reproduction with the serious welfare issues facing captive wild elephants<sup>22</sup>.

### The ivory issue

**Captive elephants in Thailand are classed under livestock legislation. One of the implications of this is that when an elephant dies it is legal to sell the ivory on the domestic market. Thailand has been identified previously as the biggest market for ivory in South-East Asia<sup>12</sup>. At the 2013 CITES convention of parties, Thailand pledged to close its domestic ivory market, but this has still not happened<sup>13</sup>.**

As well as strong international concerns that the legal ivory trade hides illegally poached ivory from Africa, there are welfare concerns for the exploitation of captive elephants in Thailand for ivory and other products<sup>14</sup>. There is a clear need for improved elephant protection laws in Thailand, and across Asia.



## The breaking in process

**All captive wild elephants will suffer a cruel and intensive breaking-in process so they can be safely used in tourism entertainment. This procedure has been handed down over generations; there are some regional variations, but they all cause intense suffering to elephants.**

The process will involve severe restraint so that the elephant only moves when commanded by the mahout, so they will accept a person riding on their neck. Severe pain is often inflicted to speed up the process and quickly establish dominance, even though it's recognised by experienced mahouts this can increase the elephant's aggression towards people.

Depending on the mahout and the individual elephant, this process can take between a few days and a week. Although a short period of time in comparison to an elephant's long life, this highly traumatic experience will stay with the elephant throughout its life. And, recent research links traumatic events like this with the development of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in elephants.<sup>18</sup>

Footage of these procedures carried out on newly captured elephants shows severe abuse and extreme stress and pain for the animal. Even if these disturbing reports are hopefully the exception, the breaking-in process remains an intensely stressful event for wild-caught and captive born animals.

## A case study for change

**India is a nation as closely associated with elephants as Thailand, with one of the highest number of captive elephants worldwide. In 2009 the Indian government acknowledged the suffering endured by captive wild elephants, and took action to reduce this suffering. It declared that captive elephants in zoos and circuses must be relocated to sanctuaries that could better meet their needs.**

The government's action followed research on the welfare of captive elephants in India that concluded captive elephant needs could not be met in venues offering captive animals for entertainment. India declared that the captive breeding efforts at these facilities had no valid conservation value as they only sustained the captive population, with no opportunities for reintroducing elephants to the wild.







## Tigers: The facts

Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) are the largest of the big cats.

The Indochinese tiger can reach a weight of about 195kg and a length of up to 2.4 metres.

They are extremely agile, powerful and mostly nocturnal predators. They can travel between 16 and 32 kilometres in a single night.

Tigers are solitary animals with home ranges of between 200 to 1,000 square kilometres, depending on the availability of food.

Their lifespan in the wild is around 10 years. While in captivity they have been known to live for more than 20 years.

Their relatively short lifespan in the wild is mainly caused by people. The biggest threats to tigers are: habitat destruction; conflict with people; hunting, and the illegal wildlife trade for use as exotic pets, traditional Asian medicine, fur and other souvenirs.

Tigers are considered endangered by the IUCN (2011) with a declining population trend and are listed in Appendix I of CITES, restricting their international trade.

## The history of tigers in Thailand

Unlike the keeping of elephants and macaques, there is no culture or tradition of keeping or farming tigers in Thailand.

The wild tiger population is in heavy decline, with only small scattered populations left in the wild. Simultaneously, the captive population of tigers in Asia has significantly increased in the last decade. This is primarily due to tiger farms, which keep thousands of tigers.

Tigers breed readily in captivity, even in highly inadequate welfare conditions, enabling large captive populations.

The most common reason for farming captive tigers is to meet the demand for tiger products, mainly from the Traditional Asian Medicine market. It is estimated that Chinese tiger farms hold around 5,000 tigers. This is more than the world's wild tiger population which stands at around 3,200 tigers<sup>24</sup>.

While international trade of live tigers and tiger products is illegal through CITES regulations, national trade depends on each country's national laws.

Those who profit from the captive breeding of tigers argue they help conserve wild tigers by satisfying demand, and preventing the taking of tigers from the wild. However, these arguments have been refuted by the former International Tiger Coalition, an alliance of 35 conservation and animal welfare groups dedicated to eliminating the trade of tigers.

According to the coalition, legalising tiger farming and the trade in tiger products, will only increase opportunities to sell parts and products from wild tigers, as it is impossible to distinguish products originating from the wild or from captive bred tigers. Sadly, some people are willing to pay more for products from wild-caught animals.

The Traditional Asian Medicine community states that tiger bone, the most common traded tiger product, is not required for human treatment anymore<sup>25</sup>; yet wild tigers continue to be exploited and traded.





**Image** A tiger cub kept on a chain is used as a prop for photographs with tourists at an attraction in Thailand

## The situation in Thailand

**The oldest and biggest tiger farm in Thailand houses more than 400 captive tigers, and promotes their success in breeding, without stating the purpose for breeding these tigers. Starting in 1995 with just 35 tigers, the venue increased its captive tiger population to between 180 to 300 tigers in just six years.**<sup>26</sup>

In 2001 this venue exported 100 tigers to an entertainment facility in China, raising concerns by CITES that this export did not comply with international regulations<sup>27</sup>.

Similarly, in just three years leading up to 2010, the well-known Tiger Temple tripled their captive tiger population from around 20 to 70 captive tigers.

Previous investigations have raised concerns of tiger entertainment venues in Thailand being linked to the international trade of tigers, triggering protection and conservation concerns<sup>28</sup>.

Throughout Thailand and across Asia, captive tiger numbers are increasing, causing intense suffering for tigers, while maintaining demand and financial incentives to poach and trade wild tigers.

A lifetime in captivity, chained and forced to interact with people, is no life for a wild tiger.





## Macaques: The facts

There are a number of indigenous macaques – pig-tailed, long-tailed and stump-tailed macaques are the most common.

The most common macaque in captivity in Thailand is the pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca nemestrina*).

Pig-tailed macaques are found throughout Southeast Asia and are extremely adaptable to different environments.

Their natural habitat ranges from coastal swamps to rainforest and areas of up to 2,000m altitude.

Pig-tailed macaques normally spend their time in the trees, covering long distances while foraging. Their home ranges vary between one to 8 kilometres<sup>29</sup>.

Males are usually much larger than females, weighing around 8 to 14kg versus 5 to 10kg for females.

Macaques live for around 26 years in the wild.

Pig-tailed macaques live in social groups of between 15 and 40 animals. The groups consist of both females and males of varying ages and maturity.

Groups establish very sophisticated hierarchies and show highly developed social behaviour.

While the pig-tailed macaque is not classified as endangered, its status is rated as 'vulnerable' by the IUCN (2011) and is noted as a declining population.

Habitat destruction, being taken from the wild for research and exploitation, and conflict with people, are the biggest reasons for their decline.

## The history of macaques in Thailand

Wild macaques are extremely inventive and adaptive. These characteristics have not gone unnoticed, and there is a long history of people capturing wild macaques to train them for various purposes. Macaques have been used to harvest fruit for over 4,000 years, while in Southeast Asia the first reports of macaques being used by people are as early as the 17th century.<sup>30</sup>

As with elephants, the captive population has been almost entirely sourced from the wild, and no domestication process has taken place.

Traditionally the most common use of wild macaques in Thailand has been for harvesting coconuts. Macaques, mainly pig-tailed macaques, can be trained within three months, and can suffer intently during the training process. Macaques are trained by specialist trainers at training centres, and then handed to private owners where it becomes difficult to assess if their welfare needs are being met.

More macaque training centres are now being turned into tourism entertainment venues, as this can be more profitable. Macaques in these entertainment venues are kept for longer in unacceptable captive conditions. They also suffer more intense training to perform for tourists and are often dressed up in costumes. Tourists are unwittingly fuelling this business, and the demand for more macaques to be taken from the wild.





# Methodology and ranking definitions

Between May and December 2010, we carried out an assessment to understand the welfare conditions experienced by wild animals in tourism entertainment venues in Thailand.

We selected venues which offered wild animals in tourism entertainment in popular tourist destinations including: Ko Lanta; Krabi, Phuket; Phang Nga; Khao Sok; Surat Thani; Ko Samui; Ko Phangan; Hua Hin; Bangkok; Kanchanaburi; Chonburi; Pattaya; Ko Chang; Surin; Ayutthaya; Sukhothai; Lampang; Chiang Mai; Mae Rim; Mae Taeng; Chiang Rai; Mae Soi; Mae Hong Son and Pai.

We visited each venue and collated information through both observation and speaking with the venue staff. The majority of visits were unannounced and we mainly communicated in Thai. In some cases where a more detailed assessment was required, we contacted the venue management prior to our visit.

We assessed the quality of living conditions and welfare of captive wild animals in each venue. **We photographed each venue in detail, and recorded the following information and observations into a database for evaluation:**



**Table 1 – Selection of categories data was collected in**

GPS location of venue	Number of visitors daily	Education of visitors	Admission fee	Animal species housed
Male, female and subadult animal numbers	Behavioural abnormalities observed	Health problems observed	Restraining methods	Enclosure quality
Hygiene standards of husbandry	Diet quality	Veterinary care	Social interaction between animals	Extent of use of animals for entertainment

Using this data we were able to calculate the welfare conditions of captive wild animals in each venue. Assessing a series of factors around living and welfare conditions, we were able to grade these factors using a 5-point Likert scale, according to the severity of the findings (see tables in Appendix I). Grades for each factor were calculated into a final score between 1 and 10 for each venue. **The final score for each venue then placed them in one of three groups:**

## Table 2 – Definition of group ratings

Group	Score	Description
I	1 – 4	<b>Severely inadequate</b> husbandry conditions and no welfare awareness
II	5 – 7	<b>Inadequate</b> husbandry conditions but some welfare awareness
III	8 – 10	<b>Commendable</b> venues, providing best possible conditions and strong awareness of animal welfare

The venues in Group 3 demonstrated higher animal welfare standards. Here, the best interest of captive wild animals were largely met by not using them for tourism entertainment, and keeping animals in living conditions closer to their natural habitat.

However, while these conditions are the best available options for wild animals in captivity, it is still a compromise when their needs can only be fully met in the wild.

Venues in Group 2, while offering inadequate living and welfare conditions for animals, demonstrated some steps towards addressing animal welfare. These groups could play a role in showcasing improved living conditions to lowest scoring venues.

As we move towards wild animal free entertainment for tourists, enabling lower scoring venues to improve their scores can help improve the welfare of captive wild animals in Thailand.

# Results and observations

- A total of 118 venues were visited across Thailand - accounting for an estimated 95% of captive wild animal venues in the country.
- 1,688 elephants, 624 tigers and 371 macaques were recorded in these venues.
- 106 of the 118 venues kept captive elephants, with 89 of those keeping elephants only.
- We could not carry out a welfare assessment in one of the venues due to limited access – consequently, 44 elephants are not included in the welfare related analysis.
- Four venues kept mainly captive tigers, including the Sri Racha Tiger Zoo which housed some elephants too.
- 21 venues kept macaques, with nine of them designated as 'monkey schools' focusing on macaque shows and training, with the remaining keeping them with other animals.

## Regional differences

Northern and central Thailand had the most captive wild elephant only venues. In the south many elephant venues also kept a small number of macaques for entertainment. This was possibly due to wider availability of macaques in the southern region for coconut harvesting.

In the central region, mixed animal venues were often large and well established, offering zoo-like facilities. A small number of venues had several branches eg the Island Safari group operated three venues on Phuket, Phang Nga and Ko Samui, but the majority of venues were stand-alone.

## Gender

We saw a discrepancy in the gender ratio of elephants and macaques. For our assessment, genders were grouped as adult male, adult female and sub-adult (not fully matured). Across the venues 69% of all elephants were adult female, and only 18% were adult male. The female to male ratio was roughly 4:1; this is more imbalanced than western zoo figures of 3:1.<sup>31</sup>

Even assuming a number of male elephants were elsewhere during our assessment; it was clear there were many more female than male elephants kept in captivity in Thailand.

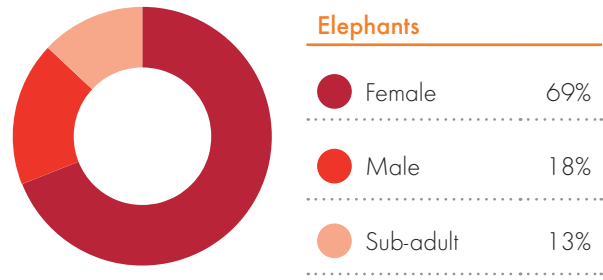
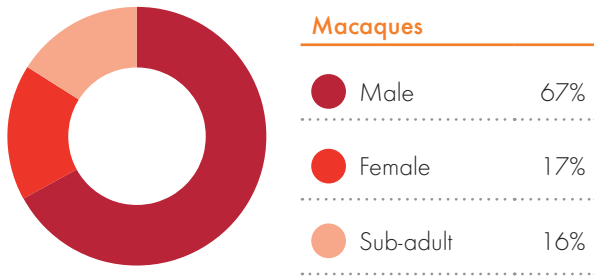
This 4:1 ratio could suggest that wild elephants were being taken from the wild, and mostly females as they are easier to control in captivity.

With a growth in captive breeding the gender balance could shift in the future. Observing this shift will be a good indicator for the potential illegal trade of elephants. If the female-to-male ratio remains imbalanced this would indicate the trade of wild elephants is continuing.

Since male elephants are significantly harder to control than females, a balanced gender ratio will pose challenges to tourism venues. It could lead to worsening welfare conditions, with males being dominated and restrained for control.

With macaques, the opposite situation was recorded, with 67% adult males compared to only 17% adult females.

Male macaques tend to be stronger and seen as more efficient at coconut harvesting. The male-to-female ratio suggested that macaques were being taken directly from the wild, with a preference for poaching males. In venues where captive breeding occurred, it was unclear what happened to the females, as in these venues male numbers still dominated.



## Welfare conditions for captive wild animals

Our assessment showed most venues in Thailand, for elephants, tigers and macaques, were offering captive wild animals either inadequate or severely inadequate welfare conditions.

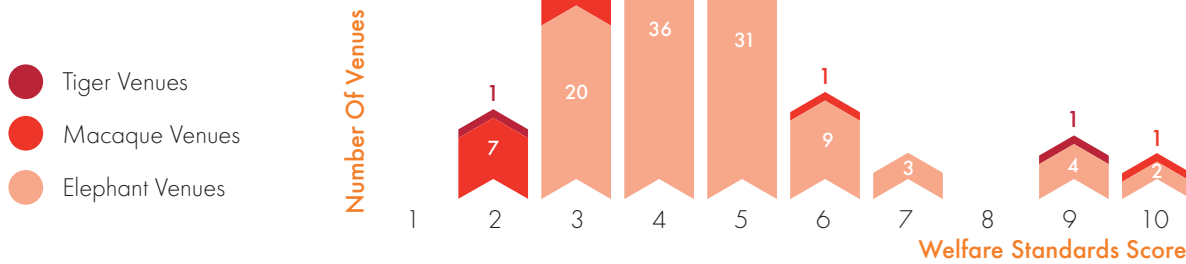
Ninety percent of venues keeping captive tigers and macaques, and 50% keeping captive elephants, received scores of 4 or lower. This categorised them as offering severely inadequate welfare conditions.

Only one captive tiger was assessed as living in commendable welfare conditions. This meant 99% of captive tigers were living in inadequate or severely inadequate conditions.

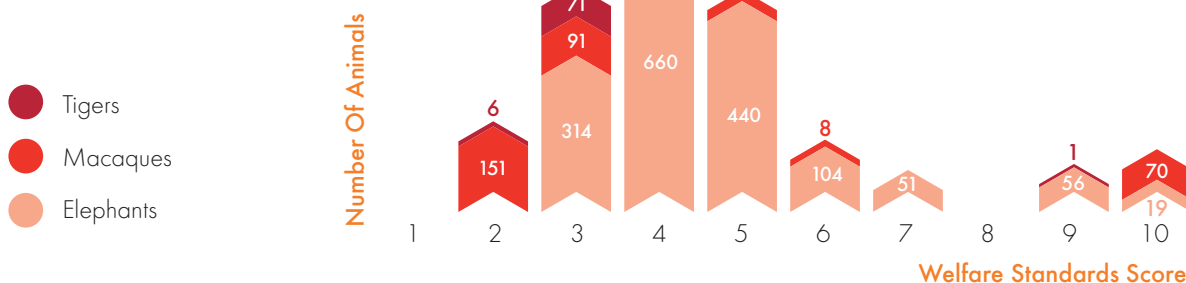
It was a similar outlook for macaques, with just one commendable venue - a wildlife rescue centre open to tourists. Although 70 macaques were living in commendable welfare conditions in this particular venue, 97% remained in severely inadequate conditions across the country.

For elephants; 974 elephants at 53% of venues were living in severely inadequate conditions, 595 elephants were kept at venues ranking in the medium group. Five percent of venues provided commendable conditions for just 75 captive elephants.

Display of number of wildlife venues according to their animal welfare standards. Higher score = Higher welfare standards



Display of number of animals according to the welfare standards they are facing. Higher score = Higher welfare standards





# Life in captivity for elephants

## Severely inadequate conditions: Group 1 - score 1 to 4

**During our assessment we reported 974 elephants suffering in venues with severely inadequate welfare standards. In these lowest scoring venues, we observed:**

- Elephants restrained on short chains all day, and sometimes in urban areas all night, except when being used for rides or performing in shows.
- Some elephants, especially males, with their front legs chained together as additional restraint; this meant they had very restricted movement.
- Inadequate shelter, with many animals chained up beside a road, or in full sunlight without any shade, or continuously standing on hard concrete ground.
- In some venues faeces piled up right next to the elephant's standing ground.
- Most elephants kept permanently saddled ready to be ridden.
- Very limited social contact with other elephants, with no allowance for natural behaviour that would enable elephants to form their social groups.
- Lack of, and limited variety and quality of, fresh food.
- Basic or non-existent veterinary care, particularly in smaller venues. A handful of larger venues (with more than 30 animals) offered basic clinic facilities.

**Image** Male elephant, both front feet chained together, waiting at a Group 1 camp

**Twenty venues offered elephant shows and elephant riding.**

Elephant shows:

- Ran between one and four times daily, using two to 12 elephants each time.
- Lasted between 30-60 minutes, usually accompanied by very loud amplification systems playing music or commentaries.
- Used younger elephants, below eight years old because they are too young for riding, more agile and easier-to-control.
- Typically consisted of circus acts. These forced elephants to stand on their hind legs, perform headstands, juggle hula hoops on their trunks, or move rapidly back and forth to imitate 'dancing'.



**The following activities were also common:**

- Elephant painting – elephants are forced to stand in front of a canvas while the mahout places a brush in their trunk and makes them ‘paint’. The mahout will guide the elephant’s strokes through commands given via a touch of the elephant’s ear or voice commands. This performance requires intensive and often cruel training of which tourists are unaware.
- Elephant football – elephants are forced to carry out a game of oversized football, often wearing a costume, with one elephant forced to play goal keeper. They have to endure intense training and perform extremely unnatural moves to take part in this seemingly innocent game.
- Elephant tight-rope walking – at least three venues in Thailand were offering elephants walking a double tight-rope, suspended between 0.5 and 1m off the ground, as entertainment. A fall from this relatively low height for an animal weighing in excess of a ton could cause serious injury.
- Elephant tricycle riding - larger elephant venues forced elephants to ride specially crafted sturdy tricycles around an arena, a cruel and unnatural act for an elephant.



Image Elephant displaying extreme and potentially damaging movements during a show at a Group 1 camp



Image Elephant showing signs of a psychological or neurological disorder, known as stereotyping, at a Group 1 camp



## Inadequate conditions: Group 2 - score 5 to 7

There were 43 venues assessed as offering inadequate welfare and living conditions for captive elephants. Most of these were medium sized, with a minimum of five elephants. 59 percent held between eight to 12 captive elephants.

These venues, while offering captive elephants some improved welfare conditions and allowing some limited freedom, were still not meeting their needs.

### At these medium scoring venues, we observed:

- Captive elephants still chained during the day, but with longer chains used to allow some degree of movement.
- Shelters offering adequate protection from the elements, with resting areas kept clean of faeces.
- Captive elephants still being used for entertainment every day, but with lower tourists' numbers and slightly less interaction with people.
- Some of the venues offering 'be-a-mahout' experiences. While these experiences are still not ideal for the welfare of elephants, they are less repetitive than consistent short treks.
- 11 of the 43 venues offered elephant shows for tourism entertainment.
- Some of the venues refrained from using the metal hook on the stick to control elephants.
- Social interaction between elephants was possible, but still very limited, with no opportunity for natural social groups to form.
- All venues were supplying regular food to the elephants while they were resting. This is an important factor in helping to minimise the stress and suffering among captive elephants



Image Tourist receives training during a 'be a mahout' course at a Group 2 camp



Image In this Group 2 camp elephants are kept on longer chains in a shaded and natural environment. They are only saddled on demand



Image Group 2 camp located deep in natural habitat. Elephants are allowed to socialise with each other while kept on long chains. 'Be a mahout' courses are offered



## Commendable conditions: Group 3 - score 8 to 10

Tourism entertainment venues offering acceptable welfare conditions for captive elephants were rare.

There were six venues in group 3, housing 75 captive elephants. These venues were generally supported by foundations or charities, but also depended on tourists or paying guests to stay or work.

These venues, while still not fully meeting the needs of elephants, which can only be met in the wild, were offering captive elephants much improved welfare and living conditions.

### The following observations were made at the highest scoring venues:

- Elephants still chained, or put in pens, but only overnight, to restrict their movement and to prevent them from damaging nearby crops and property.
- During the day elephants were provided with as much freedom as possible, and often allowed to roam in areas similar to their natural habitat.
- Elephants allowed full social interaction with each other; in the larger venues, social elephant groups had formed as they would in the wild.
- Elephants not forced to participate in any entertainment, and no elephant rides or shows offered.
- Mahouts trained to monitor their elephants without the use of force and to keep interaction to a minimum.
- Food provided at all times, and often natural foraging encouraged by providing access to forest land.
- Sick and injured animals receiving immediate treatment, with four of the six venues having resident vets on site. A fifth venue was located not too far from the largest government-run elephant clinic.
- Elephants having regular access to rivers or lakes.

- Tourists and visitors being offered education about elephant welfare and conservation, by dedicated staff available at all times.
- Interaction with people kept to a minimum, though there were some opportunities for feeding and bathing with captive elephants, which should be minimised.



Image At this Group 3 camp elephants can interact with each other without restrictions - in or outside of the pool



Image At this Group 3 camp, volunteers and mahouts at this venue are following the elephants through their natural habitat, reducing interaction to a minimum and allowing social interaction

- Most venues acquired their elephants through purchase - it is critical this is monitored so a replacement elephant is not purchased by the former owners, thus maintaining a demand for cruelly training further captive elephants. Preferably elephants would only be acquired in exchange for non-monetary alternative livelihoods to secure the former owner's income.
- Venues offering employment to former mahouts, with some offering to 'hire' elephants and offer the mahout a monthly payment. While there are advantages, it is risky if the mahout seeks to earn more, particularly in the tourist season, through more profitable activities such as using their elephant for begging.
- Venues trying initiatives such as encouraging mahouts to return with their elephants to their home villages. Here funding was offered to keep the elephants in adequate welfare conditions and to find employment for the mahouts.

Unfortunately, we noted only one of the six venues had a clear non-breeding policy. While none of the remaining venues were actively breeding elephants, they did not have a clear policy in place. A clear stance against captive breeding will assist to phase breeding out, and reduce the number of elephants born to suffer a lifetime in captivity.

While these venues offer improved welfare conditions for captive elephants, it is recognised that the full needs of elephants can only be fully met in the wild.

**Image** Most elephants at this venue enjoy access to a large area of land to range freely during the day.





# Life in captivity for tigers

During our assessment of venues housing captive tigers for tourism entertainment, we found that every captive tiger, except one, was living in severely inadequate conditions.

While venues offered variable living conditions; the use of tigers to entertain tourists, and the questionable approach to captive breeding, meant all captive tiger venues assessed offered severely compromised welfare conditions.

The sole venue assessed as offering adequate captive conditions for captive tigers was located at a rescue centre near Cha Am. This venue offered a suitably sized outdoor enclosure, with natural vegetation. It did not offer its captive tiger for any entertainment purposes. Sadly, this was just one tiger amongst over 620 tigers suffering in captivity.

## Severely inadequate conditions: Group 1 - score 1 to 4

### We observed the following in captive tiger venues:

- Most tigers were kept in cages with concrete flooring and very limited, or no, enrichment.
- Tigers kept in solitary cages, or with one or two tigers in very limited enclosure space.
- Enclosures ranged from indoor all concrete yards, or some with small outdoor enclosures, but these were restricted to a few tigers or not used at all.
- A clear lack of animal welfare understanding. For example, tiger cubs were taken from their mothers and placed with lactating pig sows, or dressed up in costumes and placed with other females away from their mothers.
- One venue placing a young tiger with an adult dog and adult pig in an exhibit, and claiming it to be for educational purposes.

- All venues offering tourists photo opportunities with captive tigers kept in small cages or enclosures, or in some cases chained up or kept on a stage throughout the day. To accept this interaction with people, tigers will have had to endure dominance from handlers, causing extreme stress.

Most venues claim their tigers have been captive bred within Thailand. This is feasible as captive tigers readily breed in captivity even when living in inadequate welfare conditions.

The largest venue we visited housed up to 400 captive tigers, and heavily promoted their captive breeding successes, but when asked would not share their annual breeding figures.

It has been estimated in the past few years that on average 100 tiger cubs were born at this venue each year. With tigers classed under CITES Appendix 1 regulations, meaning the international trade of live tigers or their parts is prohibited – it is entirely unclear what had happened to the large number of captive bred tigers.



**Image** Tigers are frequently chained on platforms to wait for tourists to pose for a picture.



# Life in captivity for macaques



Image Tricycle riding macaques are part of almost every show

## Severely inadequate conditions: Group 1 - score 1 to 4

In the venues we assessed for captive macaques, 90% offered severely inadequate welfare conditions. In these lowest scoring venues, we observed the following:

- Macaques kept in cages between 0.5 and 2metres<sup>2</sup>, with concrete flooring and no enrichment, or on a one-metre chain or leash and given very basic shelter.
- Macaques, still undergoing training, being kept on a leash in their cages; with owners claiming this teaches the macaque how to avoid becoming entangled when coconut harvesting.
- These highly social animals being kept in solitary cages to prevent injury, primarily from aggression.
- Diet consisting mainly of boiled rice, with occasional fruit and vegetables added, and a lack of freely available water.
- Cages not cleaned on a daily basis, and in the worst cases; plastic, glass, garbage and piles of faeces found in cages.
- Macaques performing shows for the entertainment of tourists two to four times a day, but in some cases the same macaques performing more than 12 times a day.
- Macaques forced to ride tricycles, perform push ups, weightlifting and backflips into pools to retrieve coins. Demonstrations of coconut harvesting, and very young macaques dressed up in costumes to re-enact knife fights or karaoke singing.
- Macaques in venues offering entertainment for tourists being kept at these venues for much longer than when being trained for coconut harvesting.
- Very limited veterinary care.
- Evidence of captive breeding, with infant macaques kept in cages or on leashes near the entrance to venues to attract tourists.

## Inadequate conditions: Group 2 - score 5 to 7

We recorded just one venue with a medium score, which housed eight macaques near Surat Thani in inadequate welfare conditions.

This venue offered some improved welfare conditions by not focussing on tourism entertainment, and openly opposing macaques performing in shows. However it was still profiting from the use of captive wild animals. Our hope is that this venue continued to refrain from offering macaques for tourist entertainment.

### At this venue we observed:

- Macaques being trained in coconut harvesting, with training by the owner mainly using positive reinforcement methods.
- Overall healthy macaques not openly displaying signs of stress.
- Macaques kept on long leashes, attached to the ground under large trees, in well cleaned areas.
- Regular food and water provided.

## Commendable conditions: Group 3 - score 8 to 10

One wildlife rescue facility run by a charity near Cha Am, which had taken in macaques from severely inadequate living conditions, offered a commendable level of welfare conditions for captive macaques.

### At this venue we observed:

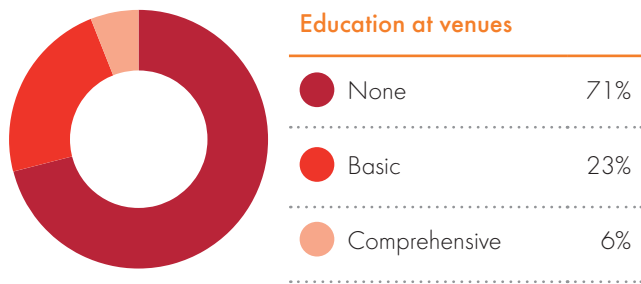
- Several large dedicated macaque enclosures, allowing – macaques the freedom to move around in a natural habitat.
- A fresh and balanced diet offered consistently throughout the day.
- Observation of animals for signs of sickness and aggression, and an onsite veterinary clinic.
- No macaques being used for any performances or for the entertainment of tourists.



Image A chained macaque at a tourist attraction in Thailand

## Mixed animal venues

Our assessment of welfare conditions was limited to elephants, tigers and macaques, but during our visits we saw venues that housed a mix of animals together for the entertainment of tourists, including orang-utans, chimpanzees and other endangered animals. Without exception these venues offered severely inadequate welfare conditions.



## Education at venues

Many of the venues we assessed, that housed captive wild animals for tourism entertainment, claimed they offered education to visiting tourists to raise awareness about wild animals.

During our assessment we recorded offerings of any educational activity or materials. If there were displays of education materials, or visual or audio information, we rated the venue as offering 'basic education'. If staff members were also available to address visiting tourists, or to answer specific questions, we rated the venue as offering 'comprehensive education'.

We found 71% of venues did not offer any form of education, and only 6% offered comprehensive education. Furthermore, we observed tourists were not using education facilities at the venues that offered basic education.

We observed some larger venues offered discounted entrance fees to school groups. This would have been an excellent opportunity to raise awareness on animal welfare, but instead school children were offered the opportunity to watch highly unnatural and exploitative performances by captive wild animals.

Performances aimed at both children and adults were loud and chaotic. They featured elephants balancing on tight ropes, or young orang-utans re-enacting kick-boxing matches and rock-shows. They offered a detrimental educational experience on animal protection and welfare.



## Statistical analysis – captive wild elephant venues

- Of the 106 venues that housed captive wild elephants, most were small to medium sized.
- 65% of venues had between one and 10 elephants.
- 26% of all captive wild elephants were housed in smaller sized venues.
- The largest proportion of elephants were found in a handful of larger venues. The eight largest venues, housed more than 40 animals, and 36% of all captive wild elephants.

In many of these venues, stereotypies were unfortunately a common sight. While our assessment did not provide an in-depth analysis of stereotypic behaviour, we did record sightings of behaviour during our visits. This gave us a broad overview of the situation.

At 61% of venues, stereotypies were observed. The severity of this behaviour ranged from simple head bobbing, to heavy weaving behaviour. At most venues we saw a number of affected animals. In five venues we observed more than 50% of captive animals showing stereotypic behaviour.

While visiting venues we selected a number of key factors related to animal welfare standards, and analysed them for statistical correlation using Pearson's correlation coefficient method. The closer the numbers were to 1 or -1 the stronger the correlation (negative or positive) between the key factors.

While correlation does not necessarily imply cause, if it does occur there can be other factors involved. Consequently, correlation can offer insight and open up topics for further investigation.

The venues that scored higher for living and welfare conditions in our assessment had fewer captive elephants with stereotypies. Similar correlations were observed in relation to the environment captive wild elephants were kept in, and the intensity of activities they participated in for tourist entertainment.

While not surprising, this underlines the real importance of improving animal welfare standards to reduce the stress and suffering of captive wild elephants. Further research into the key causes of stereotypies in captive wild animals will increase understanding and assists to protect captive wild animals.

## Venues not included in our assessment

Due to various reasons we were unable to visit and assess a number of well-known venues in 2010. Results in this report do not include:

- The Wild Animal Rescue Foundation of Thailand's rescue centre (WARED)
- the Baan Chang Elephant Park
- an unnamed venue near Phitsanulok, housing several elephants without entertainment activities
- Elephant Hills in southern Thailand.



# Conclusion

## Building understanding to protect wild animals

In 2010, World Animal Protection carried out the largest assessment ever undertaken to understand the scale and extent of suffering endured by wild animals in tourism entertainment in Thailand.

The results of our assessment clearly showed that wild animals at these venues were suffering, spending their whole lives in captive conditions that could not meet their needs. This is because these needs can only be met fully in the wild.

During our assessment in Thailand in 2010 we saw:

More than 1,300 captive elephants chained up day and night, except when performing or being ridden by tourists.

More than 600 tigers confined in concrete compounds or cages.

At least 290 macaques tethered to the ground, or caged, for every hour of every day.

We witnessed a clear link between increased signs of stress in captive wild animals, and the intensity and duration of the tourism entertainment activities they were forced to endure.

We saw fewer signs of stress in captive wild animals if their environment was closer to what they would experience in the wild.

While we know the needs of wild animals can only be fully met in the wild, we did see a small number of venues in Thailand moving towards improving conditions. However, these improvements were relatively basic.

An even smaller number of venues had recognised the importance of minimising tourist interaction and implementing higher welfare standards -these were a minority.

Our findings highlight the importance of raising awareness of captive wild animal suffering in tourism entertainment, to move people to take action and make a change to protect animals.

We are sharing these findings to open conversations, to work together towards sustainable solutions that protect wild animals, while also considering local culture and livelihoods.



## Captive elephants in tourism entertainment

Elephants are the most widely used captive wild animals in tourism entertainment in Thailand.

These highly intelligent and social wild animals are either cruelly taken from the wild, and their mothers, or are bred in captivity. Irrespective of their origin, suffering is experienced by every elephant that lives in captivity, because their needs can only be met fully in the wild.

Most captive elephants used in tourism entertainment in Thailand were kept in unacceptable conditions that could not meet their needs.

### **Key observations and welfare concerns of elephants in most venues offering tourism entertainment were:**

- Being chained or tethered day and night with limited, or no, freedom to socially interact with other elephants.
- Being forced to take part in intense and physically demanding entertainment shows.
- The risk of maltreatment through lack of awareness by elephant handlers (mahouts).
- A number of venues, while still offering largely inadequate captive conditions for elephants, acknowledged a need to improve the welfare of captive elephants, including offering sufficient veterinary care.

- A handful of mostly rescue-based venues offered better, if not best, welfare standards: limiting tourism activities to observing wild elephants, and not forcing elephants to participate in rides and shows.
- These better venues had little capacity to take in further captive elephants to prevent them suffering inadequate welfare conditions elsewhere.

Wild elephants belong in the wild. However, we know it will take time to move towards an end to the use of wild elephants in entertainment tourism.

**Elephants have a long lifespan. Consequently, as we work towards sustainable solutions to stop wild animals being used in entertainment, the following steps should be taken by venues owners to improve existing captive wild elephant welfare.**

- Do not use captive elephants in any entertainment activity.
- Allow time for elephants to interact socially with other elephants as they would in the wild.
- Keep elephants in environments that best mirror what they would experience in the wild.
- Do not chain elephants, appoint staff to watch over them or provide safe enclosures.
- Do not use elephants for rides; but if you do, ensure saddles are removed when elephants are not being ridden, and do not overload the elephants.
- Allow regular access to pools, mud and sand.
- Provide plentiful, fresh and varied food throughout the day.
- Keep areas for the elephants clean and free of faeces.
- Offer regular veterinary inspection and treatment.

- Offer tourists the opportunity to observe elephants exhibiting more natural behaviours, such as foraging or interacting with each other, rather than directly interacting with the elephants, or seeing them in shows.

To further protect wild elephants, captive breeding must be restricted to only support valid conservation needs. Law enforcement is also needed to successfully prevent the illegal trade of elephants.

To fully protect wild elephants, governments need to recognise elephants as wild animals, not livestock, and introduce guidelines for managing their welfare.

Ultimately introducing policy measures that move towards banning wild animals being used in tourism entertainment.

## Captive tigers in tourism entertainment

There is no cultural tradition of keeping captive wild tigers in Thailand, yet during our assessment we saw more than 600 tigers in captivity.

Wild tigers are generally solitary animals, and can roam up to 32 kilometres in a single night<sup>23</sup>. A lifetime in captivity, chained and forced to interact with people, is no life for a tiger.

### Key welfare concerns for tigers in most venues offering tourism entertainment were:

- 90% of tigers kept in severely inadequate conditions.
- Tigers kept in cages or concrete pits.
- Tigers chained on small platforms while tourists had their photographs taken with them.
- Tiger cubs separated early from their mothers so tourists could pay to experience feeding the cubs themselves.
- At one venue extreme exploitation, with a tiger sharing an enclosure with a pig and a dog – purely for the entertainment of tourists.
- No monitoring or reporting of what happens to adult tigers when no longer used for tourism entertainment; fuelling concerns about the involvement of the illegal wildlife trade<sup>32</sup>.

Many of the venues that use captive tigers for entertainment tourism claim they are assisting the conservation of tigers. But no captive tigers have been reintroduced to the wild. An ever-increasing captive tiger population not only fails to address this problem, it creates a lifetime of suffering for tigers that belong in the wild, not in captivity.

We will work to further investigate, and open discussion on, what can be done to protect wild tigers used in entertainment tourism. Our aim is to help protect these magnificent, endangered animals, and to help keep them in the wild.

## Captive macaques in tourism entertainment

Wild macaques are extremely inventive and adaptive. Because of these attributes, there is a long history of people capturing wild macaques to train them for various purposes.

The captive conditions for wild macaques used in tourism entertainment were wholly inadequate.

The suffering endured by macaques to interact with, and entertain, tourists was and is unacceptable. In addition, their captivity offers neither educational nor conservation benefits.

Key welfare concerns for wild macaques in most venues offering tourism entertainment were:

- Most macaques being kept in small cages or permanently chained.
- Being intensely trained to interact with people, and being cruelly exploited to entertain tourists.
- No opportunity to socially interact with other macaques, as they would in the wild.
- Being kept in unhygienic conditions, with very little or sometimes non-existent veterinary care or treatment.

Macaques are either taken from the wild or bred in captivity. The observed high male-to-female ratio suggested that females are either traded off to unknown destinations, or that macaques are being selectively taken from the wild.

Regardless of their origin, macaques suffer throughout their lives in captivity, and solutions must be considered to end their suffering.

## Mixed captive animals in tourism entertainment venues

A small number of larger venues in Thailand housed a mix of animals. These included: elephants, tigers, macaques, orang-utans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and whales and dolphins. In these venues we saw some of the worst captive conditions, and disregard for animal welfare – with animals forced to perform intensely for large audiences.

A number of these venues have been prosecuted for their involvement in the illegal wildlife trade. They offer no educational value, yet large numbers of tourists, and visiting school children, attended shows using captive wild animals for entertainment at these venues.

The captive wild animals in these venues experienced extreme suffering. Solutions must be considered to raise awareness, and to end their suffering.



# How we can work with you

**World Animal Protection** works, globally and locally, to protect animals and influence the decisions people make to protect wildlife.

We are working with governments, communities and people around the world to find practical ways, and sustainable evidence-backed solutions, to prevent animal suffering.

To protect wild animals used for entertainment tourism, we must work together with local influencers, people and partners, to open conversations to make lasting change for animals, and for people.

We would like to talk to you - to discuss sustainable, culturally sensitive and economically viable solutions to stop the use of wild animals in tourism entertainment.

We can help to build understanding about how we can all play our part to protect wild animals - to help keep them in the wild, where they belong.

**To find out more about our work please visit:**

► [www.worldanimalprotection.org](http://www.worldanimalprotection.org)



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# Appendices

## Elephants

Category/Score	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Mobility</b>	Chained + Trekking	Long Chain/ Small pen + Trekking	Pen > 100sqm + Trekking	Most time in large enclosure	Free and unrestricted movement
<b>Hygiene</b>	Old faeces + urine present, moist surface, stench, no access to pool/shower	Old faeces + urine present, some drainage, showering	Only recent faeces + urine, dry ground, short baths	Clean and dry surface, regular baths	Clean and dry surface, free choice of water and dust baths
<b>Environmental noise quality</b>	Direct vicinity to traffic, PA system, large crowds	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Occasional traffic or small groups, no electronic noise	Intermediate of 2 and 4	No noise except natural sounds
<b>Shelter</b>	Concrete ground, direct sunlight/rain	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Dirt ground with medium shelter possibility (e.g single tree)	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Natural ground with sufficient and adequate shelter options
<b>Naturalness</b>	Urban environment	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Natural environment surroundings but direct contact only with artificial structures	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Fully based in natural environment
<b>Social interaction</b>	Solitary - no visual contact with conspecifics	Visual but no tactile contact	Adequate amounts, good variety and quality, always food available, not free water access	Small social grouping possible	Complete free interaction with creation of social network
<b>Diet quality</b>	Inadequate amounts (<75kg/1000kg BDW) and limited variety	Adequate amounts but limited variety and quality	Trekking without saddle or Be-a-Mahout program	Adequate human selected variety, ad-libitum water and food	Sufficient natural food sources, free choice of consumption
<b>Entertainment intensity</b>	Show or intense use for other purposes	Undemanding shows once per day, trekking	Moderate welfare understanding, restricted use of ankhus only for required situations, call or transport to vet, no saddle unless ready to ride	No entertainment but strong interaction	Clear No-Entertainment policy
<b>Animal Management</b>	No welfare understanding, inappropriate usage of ankhus, visible wounds on elephants, elephants constantly saddled, no vet treatments	Minimum welfare understanding, strong use of ankhus, treatment only by annual or bi-annual vet visits, elephants constantly saddled	Moderate welfare understanding, restricted use of ankhus only for required situations, call or transport to vet, no saddle unless ready to ride	Good welfare understanding, sincere attempts to improve welfare standard, strong vet support	Very strong welfare understanding and focus on best situation for elephants, resident vet or strong vet support



# Tigers

Category/Score	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Mobility</b>	Caged or short chain	Long chain/rope	Small enclosure / large cage with enrichment	Medium sized outdoor enclosure with vegetation	Large area with natural vegetation
<b>Environmental noise quality</b>	Direct vicinity to traffic, PA system, large crowds	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Occasional traffic or small groups, no electronic noise	Intermediate of 2 and 4	No noise except natural sounds
<b>Shelter + Hygiene</b>	Concrete ground, direct sunlight/rain, unhygienic (garbage, faeces)	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Dirt ground, shelter possibility (e.g. single tree), moderately clean	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Natural ground, sufficient and adequate shelter options, regular cleaning
<b>Naturalness</b>	Urban environment	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Natural environment surroundings but direct contact only with man made structures	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Fully based in natural environment
<b>Social interaction</b>	Overcrowding	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Group housing with individual retreats	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Completely free choice of interaction or solitude
<b>Diet quality</b>	Inadequate amounts and limited variety	Adequate amounts but limited variety and no free water access	Adequate amounts, good variety, regularly fed, not free water access	Adequate human selected food variety and amount, ad-libitum water	Sufficient natural food sources, free choice of consumption
<b>Entertainment intensity</b>	Regular circus show or intense use for other purposes	No show but photo opps/ cub feeding / petting	No entertainment but strong interaction	Intermediate of 2 and 4	No entertainment and no interaction with visitors
<b>Animal Management</b>	No welfare understanding, malnourished animals, long working hours, strong commercial interest	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Moderate welfare understanding, attempts to create a better situation for tigers, limited working hours	Good welfare understanding, sincere attempts to improve welfare standard (enrichment), no "working hours"	Very strong welfare understanding and focus on best situation for tigers, resident vet or strong vet support

## Macaques

Category/Score	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Mobility</b>	Caged or short chain	Long chain	Small enclosure / large cage with enrichment	Medium sized outdoor enclosure with vegetation	Large area with natural vegetation
<b>Environmental noise quality</b>	Direct vicinity to traffic, PA system, large crowds	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Occasional traffic or small groups, no electronic noise	Intermediate of 2 and 4	No noise except natural sounds
<b>Shelter + Hygiene</b>	Concrete ground, direct sunlight/rain, unhygienic (garbage, faeces)	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Dirt ground with shelter possibility (e.g single tree), moderately clean	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Dirt and grass ground, sufficient and adequate shelter options, regular cleaning
<b>Naturalness</b>	Urban environment	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Natural environment surroundings but direct contact only with man made structures	Intermediate of 2 and 4	Fully based in natural environment
<b>Social interaction</b>	Solitary - no visual contact with conspecifics	Visual but no tactile contact with conspecifics	Tactile contact but no social grouping	Small social grouping possible	Complete free interaction with creation of social network
<b>Diet quality</b>	Inadequate amounts and limited variety	Adequate amounts but limited variety and no free water access	Adequate amounts, good variety, regularly fed, limited water access	Adequate human selected food variety, ad-libitum water and food	Sufficient natural food sources, free choice of consumption
<b>Entertainment intensity</b>	Circus show or intense use for other purposes	Undemanding show once daily	Petting or feeding but no shows	No entertainment but strong visitor interaction	No entertainment and no interaction with visitors
<b>Animal Management</b>	No welfare understanding, malnourished animals, long working hours, strong commercial interest	Intermediate of 0 and 2	Moderate welfare understanding, attempts to create a better situation for macaques, limited working hours	Good welfare understanding, sincere attempts to improve welfare standard (enrichment), no "working hours"	Very strong welfare understanding and focus on best situation for macaques, resident vet or strong vet support

Note: All score descriptions in each category are to be seen as guidelines for the assessor as not all situations fit exactly these descriptions. Categories with less than five descriptions still allow for scoring of all score values if the situation suggests a mix of the neighbouring score descriptions, e.g. if a venue in parts meets descriptions in a specific category for scores 1 and 3, the suggested score may be a 2.

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