



DATE: 16.12.2018

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JUSTICE FOR CAPTIVES AGAINST THE USE OF ANIMALS AS PROPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AT DREAMWORLD, AUSTRALIA

At approximately 9:30am on Sunday 16th December, Justice for Captives targeted yet another theme park on the Gold Coast that exploits animals to enhance tourist experiences.

At the busiest time of the morning, 20 members of the Justice for Captives group climbed onto the roof at the Dreamworld entrance - some dressed as tigers with chains around their necks – and all bearing banners stating their cause – in an effort to raise awareness about the use of animals for profit under the guise of education and conservation.

Dreamworld houses over 400 animals, predominantly native species, although is most famously known for breeding critically endangered tigers. Whilst we respect the collection of donations for global wildlife education and conservation programs, Justice for Captives disagree that animals should be put on display and offered as props for photo opportunities and tourism ‘experiences’ in the process. Regardless of whether some or all money collected goes towards local/global conservation programs, having your photo taken with an animal such as a tiger, a tree kangaroo or a dingo does in no way class as education or promote conservation – nor does it enhance charitable giving and behaviours in members of the public visiting the park.

We must look closer at the true motivations behind both offering and wanting to pay for a wildlife experience or a photograph with an endangered or ‘exotic’ animal.

Sophisticated conservational efforts through captive-breeding programs in some circumstances *can* be proven effective in recovering dying endangered populations. However, Dreamworld is an amusement park that relies on profit through tourism, which jeopardises real opportunities to educate the general public on urgent environmental matters that impact animals.

Justice for Captives invite Dreamworld to demonstrate a moral responsibility to animals by committing to ending the use of endangered tigers, native wildlife and livestock as props for entertainment and objects for driving profit and commercial sales.

Chelsea Hannah, a full-time psychology student and corporate professional from Melbourne states: *“We really need to ask ourselves what purpose does having a personal encounter with captive wildlife serves, and overall what role do animals used in human amusement really play in modern society? In a world of endless information, of documentaries, or of travel opportunities to see wildlife in their natural environments like never before, there is almost no excuse to justify captive-animal encounters to aid conservational or educational efforts. What we have witnessed*

at Dreamworld is almost pure exploitation of individuals who will remain captive slaves to human entertainment until tourists and members of the public stop financially supporting it”

Sev Avedis further adds: *“The world is becoming intimately aware of the facts surrounding the use of animals for entertainment. I am saddened to learn that when people attend theme parks in Australia such as Dreamworld or Sea World for an entertaining day out, the key attractions are wildlife encounters and watching animals performing tricks and unnatural stunts. We can certainly deduce that there is a disconnect with these awe-inspiring animals and what enrichment they require to live peacefully. Dreamworld contains very rare tigers for paying customers to view in an unrealistic interpretation of naturality. It is also saddening to observe a very large ageing crocodile in an enclosure that is also a frightening misrepresentation of a natural environment. We want a world where no one is entertained by suffering animals performing or on display”*

ANIMALS USED FOR HUMAN ENTERTAINMENT (DREAMWORLD)

TIGERS: Rare and endangered animals are constantly put on show for human entertainment and profit. Dreamworld's 22yr-old tiger exhibit displays many tigers bred and bought from around the world and trained through reinforcement using meat and cow's milk to perform stunts to wow paying customers. Whilst they are young, Dreamworld will regularly parade the cubs around the park through large crowds and encourage countless children to pat them and pose for a photograph – before being sold to zoos.

Tigers are intelligent, solitary, nocturnal apex predators – and what Dreamworld does is put these animals in confined and unnatural conditions which contradicts every one of their natural behaviours their wild cousins are free to express.

Justice for Captives acknowledge Dreamworlds efforts to encourage customers to donate to the “Dreamworld Wildlife Foundation” using pocket change and merchandise sales, however no percentage of the DWF funds are donated through Dreamworld themselves which suggests contradicting motivations behind keeping and breeding these animals.

OTHER ANIMALS: Dreamworld houses over 400 animals, most in the Corroboree section of the park. Amongst these animals are:

- Two crocodiles, one of which has been in the same, small concrete enclosure for over 18 years without vet care.
- Wombats and emus in almost completely bare, red-dirt enclosure. Wombats and emus in the wild graze on grass and walk amongst the bush. Employees of Dreamworld have stated that if there was grass in the enclosure, they would eat it.
- Trained dingos, endangered tree kangaroos, kangaroos, koalas, snakes and other native animals waiting each day to pose in photographs in small artificial enclosures.
- Several turtles in a pond covered in moss due to poorly kept enclosures
- Sheep, ready to be herded and roughly shorn as part of a show.

<https://www.Dreamworld.com.au/things-to-do/Corroboree/wildlife-photos>