



The big debate

Should all zoos be closed?

Zoos help many species, but some people say animals should never be locked up.

What you need to know

- Following thousands of years in which people kept wild animals, the first modern public zoo opened in Paris, France, in 1793.
- Early zoos like this kept animals in very small enclosures. They were mostly for people's entertainment.
- Today, many zoos are different. Enclosures are bigger and built to resemble natural habitats. And many zoos contribute to conservation by breeding endangered species to release into the wild.



DID YOU KNOW?
About 5,000 years ago, people in Egypt and Mesopotamia kept dolphins, bears, and giraffes in private collections.

Worldwide, there are about 300 fully accredited zoos, aquariums, and other animal-care facilities. Being accredited by an organization such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) means they offer the highest level of care to their animals, from keeping polar bear habitats cool enough to sourcing the most nutritious eucalyptus leaves for koalas. These facilities also educate visitors on the importance of protecting animals and invest millions of dollars in conservation programs to save at-risk species. But many say that's still not good enough and animals should live only in the wild. What do you think? Should all zoos be closed?

Yes—animals need to be free

Zoos are working hard to make animal enclosures bigger and more natural these days, but the animals still have limited space. That's especially hard for big species like elephants that roam freely in the wild. And many studies have shown that animals like chimpanzees and orangutans can suffer from stress and heart disease when kept in captivity. Living in a zoo can also make animals lonely, which affects their mental health. There are other ways to make people aware of the wonder of animals, like TV shows, photos, and books. No one has ever seen a real dinosaur, but that doesn't stop us from being fascinated by them, right?

No—they're saving many species

It wouldn't make sense to close all zoos—some do amazing work to bring endangered species back from the brink. This year, for example, US facilities welcomed the birth of critically endangered red ruffed lemurs, eastern bongos, and African penguins. And seeing an animal on TV is nothing compared to seeing it in real life. Zoos educate us about species and the threats they face, but they also inspire us to fall in love with animals—which will motivate us to protect them. Besides, many species are endangered because their wilderness habitats and food sources are gone. They'd have nowhere to go if the zoos that care for them closed.

YES

Three reasons all zoos should be closed

- 1 Zoos have improved, but they simply can't provide enough space for animals to wander freely inside them.
- 2 Studies have shown that captivity affects animals' physical and mental well-being.
- 3 We don't need to keep animals captive for our own purposes. We can learn about them in so many other ways.

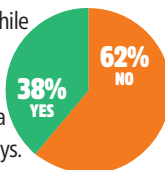
NO

Three reasons all zoos should not be closed

- 1 Many zoos are doing vital work to protect endangered species and boost their numbers in captivity and in the wild.
- 2 Seeing animals in person makes us care about them and inspires us to work to protect them.
- 3 Some animals no longer have natural habitats or food sources in the wild.

LAST ISSUE'S POLL

Last week, we asked if food has gotten too spicy. Most of you (62%) said your meals are not overly hot, while others (38%) think there's too much of a kick these days.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think all zoos should be closed or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.