



I Speak for Paws

WILD ANIMALS

Tammy Wunsch | August 2018

About the Author

Tammy Wunsch currently resides in the Quiet Corner of Connecticut though she has also called both New York City and Los Angeles home. Formally educated in business, she has worked in a variety of industries and is both entrepreneurial and adventurous by nature. She is passionate about animals and loves to travel, cook, kayak, and read.

Her current role is as a Freelance Copywriter who promotes portable income opportunities (PIO), as well as living, product, and service options for current and future expatriates.

Visit her online at [Expat Writer](#) or follow I Speak for Paws on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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Remember to always use your voice to speak for those who have none.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws!

Stop Molesting the Wildlife!

ispeakforpaws.com/stop-molesting-the-wildlife

May 18, 2016



Dictionary.com defines a selfie as “a photograph taken with a smartphone or other digital camera by a person is also in the photograph, especially for posting on a social-media website.” Admittedly, I am not a fan of being photographed, so there are very few pictures of me online. Generally, I only allow friends to take my picture if I have the right to refuse publication. It’s just easier to not be photographed. Based on my feelings for displaying my photo publicly, I can count the number of selfies I’ve ever taken on my hands.

I just don’t understand the constant barrage of photos that people display of themselves, especially when they are typically all variations of a person making a fish-face in a mirror. Imagine how I feel then about tourists posing for selfies with wildlife. Recently, tourists in Argentina passed around a baby dolphin so they could all take pictures with the cute baby. A dolphin. A marine animal which lives in the water. What could possibly go wrong? The dolphin quickly overheated and it was left to rot in the sand on the beach. This led to the Argentinian Wildlife Foundation to issue a reminder about the vulnerability of La Plata dolphins which are only found off the coasts of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. A warning? Every single person who published a photo of themselves with that baby dolphin, that dead baby dolphin, should be arrested and prosecuted for animal cruelty. They caused the death of a defenseless, innocent, baby dolphin. People need to learn that we share our planet with other species. The desire to exhibit a selfie with a cute baby dolphin does not override the health and safety of that animal. If you want a selfie with a dolphin, go snorkeling or scuba diving. Do not take the animal out of its natural habitat for your self-aggrandizing motives. Let it live! Read more about

the baby dolphin's senseless death [here](#).

We all know that a marine animal belongs in its natural habitat. It also has the right to live, swim, and do marine animal activities without being harassed and molested. A 23 year old woman in Boca Raton, Florida today was rushed to the hospital with a two-foot long, dead nurse shark latched onto her arm. Witnesses reported that beachgoers were antagonizing the animal and pulling its tail in the shallow water. The woman claimed that she wasn't one of the harassers – after posting a picture of herself with the dead nurse shark in a plastic bag – but how else could she have been close enough for the shark to latch onto her arm? If she had been trying to save the animal from being bullied, I think that is the story she would have posted. Just because a marine animal swims into shallow water, you do not have the right to bother it. You are in the animal's habitat. Plus, this shark was a nurse shark. Nurse sharks can grow as large as 10 feet, however, they are mostly docile and eat mainly crustaceans, molluscs, and other fish. If you want to tease a shark, go snorkeling or scuba diving. Pick on one your own size and see what happens. Read more about the travesty of the nurse shark's death [here](#).

I think we have established that tourists at beaches can be inhumane in pursuit of their own glamorous, selfie-shots. Unfortunately, idiocy is not confined to the sea. A baby bison, the animal which was just introduced as the United States national mammal, was euthanized in Yellowstone National Park after tourists decided he seemed cold and needed to be rescued. Did they do the smart thing and contact park rangers to express their concern? No. They loaded the baby bison into the back of their SUV and transported it to a ranger station. The rangers tried to reunite the baby with its herd, however, it was not accepted. The poor baby bison was then euthanized – instead of being brought to a rescue organization that might have been able to help – after it was deemed dangerous by approaching people and cars. While many rescue organizations are fiscally stretched to their limits, were any contacted for assistance with the baby bison? Any sane person should know not to interact with wild animals. Ever. Wild animals do not belong in the back, front, or on top of any vehicle. If there really is a serious problem that you notice or are concerned about, alert the authorities. Do not try to solve the problem yourself. You are not an expert. You should not make life or death decisions for wild animals. Read more about the heartbreaking death of the baby bison [here](#).

Of course, in too many cases, the “experts” response is to kill the animal:

- Remember [*Mohawk the lion being gunned down by the Kenyan Wildlife Rangers when he could easily have been captured?*](#)
- Remember the [*captured wild horses that the Wildlife Services kills for grazing on public lands?*](#)
- Remember the [*male swan that was killed for protecting its nesting site?*](#)
- Remember the [*Zanesville massacre where 49 wild animals were slaughtered after being released from captivity?*](#)

Unfortunately, there are many more instances which can be cited. We need to stop the senseless slaughter of animals for selfies or hero-complexes. In the meantime, do something positive and stop molesting the dolphins, sharks, and baby bisons. It is our responsibility, our

duty, to use our voices to speak for those who have none.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws!

Tammy Wunsch



Stop Molesting the Wildlife, Part II

ispeakforpaws.com/stop-molesting-the-wildlife-part-ii

September 9, 2016



I think I've mentioned before that I don't like to have my picture taken. It follows that I also don't like taking my own photo. I know it's illogical, but I just don't ever feel like any picture really looks like me. I've even dubbed myself the "Least Photogenic Person on the Planet." My profile picture on the About page of this website comes closest to how I feel.

So, logically, you can understand that I just don't get the whole selfie phenomenon that has overtaken the world. People spend so much time documenting what they are doing or eating, that they are not actually participating in life or interacting with people they are with. Normally, it doesn't bother me. I just shrug my shoulders and let people live – or not-live – their lives as they see fit...except when people's obsession with selfies involves mistreating animals or pay-to-play photo opportunities. Those people need to be educated!

Take a minute to think about why that cute tiger or lion cub is sitting in that cage, waiting for you to pony up some cash to play with him. Where is his mother? Many of these cubs are just three weeks old. They should be by their mothers' sides, not ripped from them moments after birth to be hand-raised by humans. Their shelf-life as pay-to-play moneymakers is just a short three to four months. What do you think happens to them when they are too big to interact with the stupid humans with their cameras? They are sold off to roadside zoos, circuses, zoos, aquariums, and hunting ranches to provide trophies for "sport" hunters who care only for the

trophies. Sometimes they are even sold for their meat – there is a lucrative exotic animal meat market in Mexico, though I'm sure if you look hard enough, you could find it here in the United States as well.

Mainly, those animals used in pay-to-play interactions are captive bred. It is a terrible and disgusting tragedy, but until selfie-taking morons wise up and the USDA starts to enforce the Animal Welfare Act, instead of issuing countless citations without any punishment, than the industry will continue to flourish.

There is, however, another area where the uninformed, self-obsessed consumer is outright harming, in some cases, killing, the wild animals. I'm talking about our national parks. Lovely bastions of wilderness, seemingly protected from industrialization, capitalism, and life-threatening dangers.

Most of our national parks have rules stating that visitors – yes, we are visiting a wildlife habitat – remain 25 yards from wildlife. That's not to say that wildlife molestation is the only source of visitor criminal activity at the parks. People also camp illegally in off limit areas, steal natural resources, vandalize, and generally disregarding the rules which are put in place for safety reasons. In July alone, the ten most-visited parks reported more than 11,000 incidents of rule infractions. These violations can harm visitors, displace wildlife, and damage natural resources. The 11,000 incidents led to citations, but in 2015, there were also 52,000 warnings given to visitors who were flouting the rules.

With budgets stretched thin, park rangers are unable to address all the violations. Frequently they hear about the transgressions the same way that you or I do – through pictures on social media. People post pictures of themselves approaching elk herds, grizzly bears, bison, and other dangerous wildlife, despite widely publicized reports of people being chased by elk, mauled by bears, and gored by bison. Add to the list the dangers presented by mountain lions and venomous snakes, and you should consider yourself at serious risk.

More importantly, you put the animal at risk of injury or death. If your quest for the perfect selfie with a grizzly bear leads to you getting injured, what do you think happens to the bear? It is deemed a safety hazard, hunted, captured, and killed.

Earlier this year, an ignorant tourist loaded a baby bison found standing alone into his SUV and brought it to a ranger station. The bison was not able to be reunited with its herd after human contact and had to be killed.

If you visit a national park and want a picture of a wild animal, buy a zoom lens and remain the recommended distance away from the animal. You are not special. You are not different. You could be injured or killed and your actions could lead to the death of a wild animal. Remember, you are visiting the animal's home. Don't chase it or stalk it or feed it or interact with it in any way.

All wild animals deserve to live their lives unmolested in the wild. We have failed so many of them. Let the animals living free in our national parks enjoy their wild life. If you see people molesting the wildlife, call it in to the park rangers. You never know whose life you might be saving.

Always remember, use your voice to speak for those who have none.

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How To Hurt Tigers

ispeakforpaws.com/how-to-hurt-tigers

August 25, 2016



How do you hurt a tiger? Love him. Not really. If you really loved tigers, you would know that any public interaction with them, from cute cubs to tiger petting is cruel and inhumane to that specific big cat and harmful to the species in general. Now, I'm sure you aren't intentionally trying to harm, or kill, a tiger, but what do you think happens when that cute little tiger cub gets too big to handle.

Months after Thai authorities raided Tiger Temple and confiscated 137 tigers, the tiger tourism trade continues. Actually, it is flourishing. The next day, Thai tourism sites reported that the Tiger Temple was closed, but, don't worry! Just a short distance away there was another tiger attraction featuring even more animals and yes, tigers, for you to fondle and endanger.

The Tiger Temple case is extremely confusing and sad. For years, the Thai authorities received complaints about Tiger Temple. There were missing tigers and new cubs that had never been registered with the government. They should have been more proactive, or even just a little bit proactive. It would have saved many of the tigers who were sent to a slaughterhouse where their parts and pelts were sent to China for unproven medicinal treatments and tourist trinkets. To read more about the Tiger Temple case, you can read what I've written previously [here](#) and [here](#). I recently wrote to the Thai [Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation](#) as I could find no follow-up information on the tigers. I'm still waiting for their response. We may never know what happened to the 137 confiscated tigers.

Many countries engage in the illicit-but-profitable tiger trade. There are new facilities being constructed in Laos and China to feed the insatiable public's desire for tigers in every shape and form. While exporting and trade in tigers is prohibited by CITES, enforcement appears to be very lax. Why else would people easily be able to drink tiger wine, eat tiger meat, own tiger pelts, and be treated by innumerable cures flaunting their tiger ingredients?

We tend to think of tiger exploitation and tourism as something that happens “on the other side of the world.” This is patently untrue. The captive tiger trade is proliferating in the United States. It is estimated that there are more than 5,000 tigers are being held captive in the United States. That is considerably more than the 3,200 estimated tigers living in the wild.

You may wonder where these 5,000 tigers live. Many of these 5,000 tigers live in captive breeding facilities, backyard menageries, roadside attractions, hunting ranches, circuses, zoos, aquariums, and as private pets. Some of these venues masquerade as a rescue or sanctuary, but they are not accredited by GFAS or ASA. This is generally apparent by the display of the animals, breeding, treatment, and conditions the animals live in.

It is astonishingly easy to purchase a tiger cub. Some states are now tightening their rules for exotic animal ownership after the wild animal massacre in Zanesville a few years ago, but many existing exotic pet owners are allowed to maintain ownership providing they obtain a permit. You may not even know there is a tiger living down the street from you until something happens. Even if there are problems or issues with the exotic pet owner, the USDA is abysmal in their enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. They can write citations, but actually closing facilities and confiscating animals does not seem to be very high on their list of priorities, even when there are accredited sanctuaries willing to provide suitable habitats and environments for the animals.

Many of the animals living in accredited sanctuaries have been surrendered by their owners who can no longer care for an apex predator. Can you really imagine an adult tiger walking through your house? The cost of providing appropriate meals is also very high, and many owners find they can no longer adequately provide for their “pets”. Many other of the sanctuary animals are retired from biomedical research or entertainment venues – discarded when they're no longer useful. Still others are orphaned or found abandoned. Fortunately, accredited sanctuaries understand the needs of these big cats and ensure that they will never be exploited again.

I understand. Tiger cubs are adorable. How could one selfie actually hurt the animal? Actually, a selfie hurts the animals in ways you may never know. Many people feel that they are helping the venue care for the tiger if they pay to play. Nothing could be further from the truth. Paying to play with animals just fuels the captive breeding programs at unaccredited venues. Captive breeding does nothing to promote species growth in the wild as animals bred in captivity can NEVER be released to the wild. They do not have the necessary skills and behaviors they would need to survive. Additionally, these breeding programs provide animals to the illegal wildlife trade. Many end up on hunting ranches where “great hunters” pay to slaughter a drugged and captive animal for “sport” so they can have a trophy on their wall.

The *Humane Society of the United States* conducted an undercover investigation into two roadside zoos – the National Bridge Zoo in Virginia and Tiger Safari in Oklahoma. The conditions that the animals were forced to live in were unsanitary. Cubs were torn from their mothers within three weeks of birth to be handled by up to 30 paying tourists per day. Cubs were denied adequate veterinary care, appropriate food, and the freedom to behave as wild animals. Cubs were physically disciplined for failing to comply and kept hungry to keep them compliant. When they are too big to handle, the cubs were shipped to even worse-run roadside zoos and faux sanctuaries to be bred and drugged for further exploitation. Read the report *here*.

With such easy access to information on the internet, you would think that people could educate themselves about how torturous it is to interact with a tiger cub. You would think that finding a venue that promotes such devastating behavior would be hard to find. Wrong! Pull up Google and search “*pet a tiger*”. Look at the results – 27,000,000 results found in .64 seconds, many of them found within the United States!

We, those who truly care, need to be better about educating the general public.

- Use your voice to tell everyone you know why they should never pay to play with tiger cubs – or any wild animal for that matter.
- Use your voice to tell inform anyone considering an exotic animal interactive experience why it is so detrimental to the species.
- Use your voice to boycott any company that promotes animal exploitation – even those in movies, television shows, and advertising campaigns.
- Use your voice to let airlines know you will not fly with them if they allow the transport of illegal trophies or tourist trinkets.
- Use your voice to publicize the treatment of animals being held anywhere other than an accredited sanctuary, such as roadside attractions, zoos, circuses, aquariums, and fake sanctuaries.
- Use the power of currency – which sometimes speaks louder than your voice – to not visit roadside attractions, zoos, circuses, aquariums, and fake sanctuaries.
- Use your voice to demand that the USDA quit writing citations year after year and take action to ensure the rights of animals under the *Animal Welfare Act*.
- Use your voice to speak for those who have none.
- Use. Your. Voice.

I have a voice and I Speak For Paws.

Please watch the video below by the *Wildcat Sanctuary* which explains why you should just say NO to petting wild animals.

Please visit the Forums and Community pages of the I Speak For Paws website and start using your voice. I welcome and look forward to your participation in our social network. Together, our voices can make a positive change for animals!

Don't forget to like I Speak For Paws on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* to keep abreast of

all that happens in animal welfare. I welcome your comments and participation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3la2O8icanM>

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