



I Speak for Paws



How to Speak for Paws

YOU CAN BE A VOICE FOR ANIMALS

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The Purpose of this Book

Oftentimes, people talk about how concerned they are about animal welfare, but then they shrug and say they can't do anything to help because they don't have the time or the money. There are lots of ways you can help support animal welfare and improve animals' lives, and this book will provide details about many of them. Of course, it is still up to you to act on the suggestions and tips in the book.

I would like to be as comprehensive as possible, so I welcome any suggestions or methods that you use to speak for paws – or any type of animal – and I will gladly include them in the next edition.

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

I have a voice and I Speak for Paws!

I Speak for Paws Journey

My decision to speak out for animals has been a journey which began about five years ago when I decided that the holiday season was too stressful and not enjoyable at all. There were no little kids in my life and I wanted to do something beneficial for “someone”. I had started following a chimpanzee rescue on Facebook and they seemed like a great organization that was doing important work. I contacted them and asked whether they needed extra volunteers over the holidays, and a tradition was born. I began volunteering at Save the Chimps in Fort Pierce, Florida, and it was simply the most fulfilling holiday I have ever celebrated! Nothing makes you feel better about the holidays than helping others –



whether it's humans or animals. Most volunteers at the sanctuary help prepare meals for the chimps while those with more experience can also help clean up the chimp enclosures. It was the hardest, most gratifying, labor I had worked in years. I went back to the hotel every night, took a hot shower to relax my aching muscles, and collapsed into a deep, restful slumber. Despite the aches and pains, it was the best feeling ever. I returned a few times and I have also represented Save the Chimps at events in New England where I live.

As distance is a factor and I wanted to continue to help animals, I recently started volunteering at Our Companions, a local dog and cat rescue here in Connecticut.



In addition to physically going to the rescue and spending time with the cats and dogs, I write articles for their newsmagazine, and I look forward to making a difference in the lives of those animals.

Even with the volunteering, I didn't feel like I was doing enough for animals, so I started an animal welfare blog titled I Speak for Paws. I love writing the blog. I feel that I have finally found my life's passion. I enjoy everything about writing, from the research and fact checking to the technical set-up to putting words on

the screen. I love the freedom of picking topics I want to write about that people want to read.

I Speak for Paws is the title of my blog which led to the launch of a social media network of animal lovers who care about animal welfare and animal rights. In the beginning, I wasn't sure what would happen. I thought I would write a few blog posts about animal stories that stirred my passion and that I would probably be done with it in a few months. Now, more than two years later, I realize that I'm just beginning.

While the word "paws" usually refers to mammals, I interpret paws in the broadest way possible to include all animals, including hooved, feathered, flippered, scaled, and handed, like primates and humans. I don't write much about humans – unless it is to condemn their treatment of animals – but I have given shout-outs to those who do right by animals.

Unfortunately, and very sadly, there are a lot of animal welfare and cruelty issues in the world. I cannot access the internet without reading about some cretin who perpetrated an inhumane act on a defenseless animal. There are also traditionally accepted animal venues such as zoos, aquariums, theme parks, and wildlife parks which acquire animals from the wild, purchase them from breeders, or breed the animals in captivity themselves. No wild animal in captivity is happy or free to live their lives naturally, even under seemingly-humane conditions such as specially-built enclosures. When you consider the institutionally ingrained animal abuses that many people just accept, such as bullfighting, pay-to-play with tiger or lion cubs, roadside zoos, and puppy mills to name a few, there is a lot for me to cover. That also means that there is a lot for **all of us** to do.

In addition to the blog, there are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages where I share news, blogs, photos, and stories about animal welfare. Check us out when you're done reading this book! Additionally, I Speak for Paws curates news content from the world of animal welfare and publishes a daily newsletter, I

Speak for Paws Daily, to keep you current and informed. You can sign up to receive the newsletter on the website.

Until then, I hope you enjoy this book and learn how you can use your voice to speak for those who have none.

I have a voice, and I Speak for Paws.

Animal Sanctuaries

Do you have a favorite animal? It's probably an animal you have thought about a lot since you were little. Maybe you had a stuffed animal that represented the real animal, or always made sure to go visit that animal when you went to the zoo, or read lots of books about that species. Even if there are a few animals that you think of as your **FAVORITE**, pick a few and then do some research. Follow these steps to find a sanctuary you would like to support:

1. Are there any sanctuaries that rescue and/or rehabilitate your favorite animals?
2. Is the sanctuary accredited by either the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) or the American Sanctuary Association (ASA)? If not, chances are that the so-called sanctuary is really a roadside attraction, backyard breeder, or unaccredited zoo. Go to the GFAS and ASA sites and review their requirements to accredit an animal sanctuary. You don't want to support anyone that does not adhere to these basic standards. I personally add another requirement to determining a sanctuary I want to support – I believe a sanctuary is only truly valid if they do not exploit the animals in any



way. In essence, the sanctuary should not be open to the public (except for an occasional member day or special event). Additionally, I believe a sanctuary should not be engaged in any type of breeding program.

3. Now that you have defined what an animal sanctuary means to you, find sanctuaries with animals that interest you on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Then, like, follow, and share their updates, videos, pictures, and news. This helps to expand their reach and educates more people about the sanctuary. Best of all, it is free and will fit right in with your daily social media browsing.

4. Go to your favorite sanctuaries' websites and sign up to receive their email newsletter and blog. Distribute both to your email and social media networks when you receive them to further spread the word about each sanctuary.
5. Be a social media sanctuary ambassador. Share success stories, videos, updates, holiday celebrations, requests for funding, and pictures you receive in your newsfeed or other social media accounts. Engage and comment on all the updates you receive. Your engagement will make your friends, families, and social media contacts take notice of the sanctuary and perhaps persuade them to join you as sanctuary promoters.

Remember, as more people like and follow a sanctuary on social media, their friends and followers are also educated about dangers to that species and important legislation affecting them. Most sanctuaries make it a point to limit the volume of emails they send to their supporters and most will never share or sell your email address. I found [Save the Chimps](#) through a friend on Facebook, loved what I read, and started following them, too. This led to me receiving their weekly *Happy Friday* emails and resulted in me signing up to volunteer there annually. I also table events for them in the New England area and work hard to educate and spread the word about this fantastic organization.

How to Help Sanctuary Animals

Now that you have taken the first step to support and promote your favorite sanctuaries, how else can you help them? First of all, always look at their website and social media accounts to see if there is something they specifically need at that point in time. They could need someone to perform lawn maintenance or help with a mailing or – depending on the type of animal – care for the animals.

1. *Volunteer at the sanctuary.*

Sanctuaries are almost always looking for volunteers, and, if you are local, that's great. You can



set your schedule to help prepare meals, walk dogs, socialize cats, repair habitat enclosures, or other tasks that need to be done.

2. *Volunteer for events.*

If you do not live local to a sanctuary you want to support, you can volunteer to speak at local community organizations to raise awareness or staff a table at an animal-related event near you where you can discuss the sanctuary, disseminate information, collect emails, and act as an ambassador for the sanctuary residents. Schools are sometimes looking for speakers to teach students about conservation and animals and welcome people with species-specific knowledge. The more people that become aware of the sanctuary, the larger the pool of potential donors or future volunteers.

3. *Host a fundraiser.*

Speak with the sanctuary that you would like to support. Some sanctuaries may allow you to host a fundraiser online or in your town to benefit the sanctuary

residents. If you don't want to solicit money from your friends and family, perhaps you can have a party where you



assemble enrichment items, gifts, or treats. When you are able to donate time or

enrichment to the sanctuary, the caregivers are able to spend more time caring for the animals.

4. *Other needed skills.*

No matter what your skill set, you can probably find something you can do to volunteer from home online.

Write. Sanctuaries are frequently looking for volunteers to write articles, web content, or emails to potential donors.



Social Media. If you enjoy social media interactions, you can volunteer an hour per week (or more!) to promote the sanctuary on various social media platforms.

Grant-writing. A skilled grant-writer can help by volunteering to research and write grant proposals.

Photos. Websites are very visual and website visitors seek new photographs every time they visit. If you are an accomplished photographer, you could donate your services to provide candid and action shots of the sanctuary residents in their habitats and during special events or celebrations.



Professional Services. There may also be a need for the services of lawyers, accountants, or financial advisors.

Whatever your skill or ability, your favorite sanctuary could probably benefit from your generosity.

5. *No time to volunteer.*

Life gets busy and sometimes we just don't have the time to volunteer, but you don't want to neglect your favorite sanctuary. What can you do?

Donate. Donations are accepted 365 days per year. You can donate once or monthly, in memoriam of a beloved pet, as a birthday or holiday present for an animal-loving friend or relative – you can even set up a bequest. Sanctuaries use every penny donated and have learned how to stretch the funds as far as they can to benefit the greatest number of residents.



Shop. Most sanctuaries have an online store with sanctuary logo merchandise. Show your support for your favorite animals – and advertise the sanctuary – with a t-shirt, baseball cap, or reusable water bottle. You can shop for items on the sanctuary's Amazon Wishlist and have the items they need sent directly to the



sanctuary. This way, you are certain that you are sending items that the sanctuary truly wants and needs. You can even contribute to your favorite sanctuaries while going about your everyday business. If you

are an Amazon.com shopper, you can join Smile Amazon for free. A portion (0.5%) of every purchase you make through Smile.Amazon.com is donated – at no additional cost to you or markup of goods – to your chosen sanctuary. It may not seem like a lot, but your purchases – and the purchases of thousands of others – add up over time.

Be creative. Look for free or low-cost items needed by local shelters or sanctuaries on Freecycle, CraigsList, eBay, or other websites that offer items discounted for sale. People having yard sales may be willing to donate items they are unable to sell – it's certainly better than dragging those items back in the

house or hauling them away. Contact local hotels and ask if they have any old bedding and towels that are still usable.

Use the internet. You can also install [GoodSearch](#) and use it as your default search engine. [GoodSearch](#), in conjunction with [GoodShop](#), provides coupons for stores where you already shop and provides donations to your chosen charity, based on your usage. It's a great way to generate funds while doing activities you already do!



Transport animals. For sanctuaries that cater to domesticated animals, there may be opportunities available to help transport an animal for either rescue or adoption. You could transport the animal for a portion of a route or the whole route, whichever fits your schedule

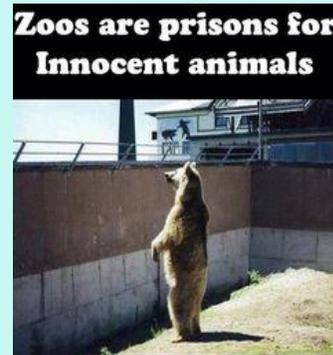
best. It is a great way to demonstrate your commitment to animals.

How to Help Non-Sanctuary Animals

I have mostly been discussing how you can help animals who currently live in a sanctuary situation. There are thousands of animals who have not yet been rescued by a sanctuary and who need our help today. Following are methods and tactics you can employ to speak for those who have no voice.

1. *Don't Promote Captivity.*

NEVER frequent zoos, aquariums, wildlife parks, roadside attractions, circuses, breeding farms, or any venue that promotes live animals as “entertainment.” The major reason wild animals are captured or bred and held in captivity is that there are so many people who are willing attendees of these venues – people who do not realize that the animals silently suffer. The animals may look healthy and well-cared for, but this is typically not the case. Animals often live in solitude, filth, and squalor. Animals in traveling shows are often confined to tiny cages, chained, and not allowed to feel grass or experience normal species-specific social activities.



Everyone loves a cute lion or tiger cub. People often pay large fees to interact with cubs and have pictures taken with them. The animals that participants interact with are generally babies – usually under three months old! By three months old, they are no longer controllable even with the trainer’s regular beatings and whippings. They are then shipped off to breeding farms, hunting ranches, roadside zoos, or the highest bidder for an unimaginable, horrific fate.



Atrocities are perpetuated against animals worldwide, all in the name of profit. Tiger Temple of Thailand – which was finally closed down in 2017 – had an abominable record of tiger mistreatment. Tigers would be bred repetitively and their cubs ripped away and sold off to other pay-to-play venues. Tigers would



suddenly disappear and never be seen again. When the temple was closed, government officials found a number of dead cubs preserved in a freezer. These cub births had never been registered, as is required by law. Other tigers from Tiger Temple were found at a house nearby which had been used as a tiger slaughterhouse. Authorities had “investigated” Tiger Temple for years and were aware of the atrocities against the tigers, but they turned a blind eye to the suffering and slaughter of the tigers.

Hunting ranches are ranches – usually in the United States – where “hunters” can pay to shoot dangerous, endangered animals such as lions, tigers, and bears. There is no skill or hunting ability involved as the animal is drugged and lured to a feeding area where he is then slaughtered so that someone could take a trophy home.

These are just some of the appalling futures that animals experience because tourists want a selfie with an exotic animal. Just say NO to all forms of animal “entertainment”. If the demand goes away, so will the supply, and fewer animals will suffer.

2. *Sign petitions.*

There are a number of petition sites out there as well as specific, social cause organizations that write and promote their own petitions and causes. A great way to help the animals that you love is to sign the petitions whose causes most resonate within you. Once you follow a sanctuary on social media, you may receive requests to sign a petition. It may not seem important to add your name and share, but many legislative victories have happened because thousands of people have signed a petition. Grassroots organizations are effective and can make change happen.





3. Be vocal.

Use your voice – both vocal and written – to “speak for paws.” If you read that a company is doing something detrimental to animals, contact them and let them know

your money will be spent with their competitors until they change their animal policies. Most companies are very easy to contact these days – look on their website for telephone numbers, email addresses, or a web contact form. You can also search for their name on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to contact them publicly via social media. All companies expect to be engaged by their customers in good times and in bad. Demonstrate **your** power by sharing your concerns, emails, and letters on social media. If enough potential customers express their disappointment in a company’s policies, they will make a change. Nothing generates a reaction faster than bad publicity and falling profits.

4. Support and Promote TNR Programs.

Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) is a program developed to help stabilize and reduce the number of cats in feral cat colonies. Studies show that TNR improves the lives of feral cats and improves their relationships with people who live near colonies. The reduction in reproduction will also decrease the size of the colony over time.



TNR is practiced by rescue organizations and veterinarians. Cats are trapped humanely and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered and vaccinated. Some programs may only neuter the males while some neuter both genders. The cats' ears are usually notched as a sign that the animal was neutered so they won't be trapped again in the future. When the cats recover from surgery, they are returned to their colony and continue to live their lives. Kittens, and adult cats that are friendly and socialized to humans – usually abandoned pets – may be rescued and adopted.

TNR programs have greatly reduced the number of feral cats euthanized annually. Previously, if a feral cat was captured and unable to be adopted, they were killed. Now these cats can continue to live their lives in a setting where they are comfortable. TNR programs need to be expanded and more widely adopted as there are approximately 860,000 cats euthanized in animal shelters *every year*. The numbers have decreased since 2011 due to a number of factors such as TNR, an increase in adoptions, and an increase in the number of missing pets returned to their owners.

5. How you can use your voice every day.

Foster an animal. If you do not want the commitment of having a full-time pet, you can foster an animal for a rescue. Most animal rescues are filled to capacity and hate to turn needy animals away. When you foster, not only do you free up space at the rescue, you also help socialize the animal and ensure they are adoptable. You can foster a single animal, a mother and her babies, or maybe just care for the babies. The level of necessary care and the length of the foster will vary, so pick a level of commitment with which you are comfortable. The rescue will be counting on you to care for your foster animal until an adoptive, forever family is found.



Do not buy fur or leather products. In fact, make a point of choosing retailers, designers, and brands that don't sell fur or leather. Fur farms are notoriously inhumane; the animals suffer torturous lives of deprivation and brutal deaths – all for the sake of fashion. Furs and leather fabrics are treated with toxic chemicals that bleed into water systems, pollute the environment, and poison local populations. Workers are often made sick by exposure to waste and animal diseases running rampant at fur farms and neighboring populations may suffer



higher incidences of cancer, leukemia, and pulmonary diseases. There are a multitude of non-animal alternatives to fur and leather, such as cotton and hemp. There are also synthetic fabrics, many manufactured with recycled products and industrial waste.

Do not buy products tested on animals. Many manufacturers have stopped testing their products – like make-up and medicines – on innocent animals. Databases of past research and technological advances make animal testing and biomedical research unnecessary.

Reward companies who have made the commitment to not test their products on animals and punish those who continue to torture animals in testing labs. Let



companies know why you are supporting their business and why you are not. Send emails, post on social media, or make a phone call to respectfully express your thoughts on the subject.

Adopt, don't shop. There are thousands of dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens (and other animals) available for adoption at rescues and animal control offices across the country. If they are not adopted, many will be euthanized. Never buy your animal from a pet store – unless it is a rescue animal – or unaccredited back

yard breeder. California just became the first state to legislate that pet stores only sell rescue animals. Hopefully, more will follow California's lead.



Puppy and kitten mills are horrendous, unhygienic, and cruel. A puppy mill is a commercial dog-breeding facility which increases profit by keeping overhead low. These cost-saving measures affects the health and welfare of the captive animals. The animals are housed in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, without adequate veterinary care, food, water, and socialization. The females are bred consecutively with little to no recovery time between litters. When they can no longer be bred, they are killed and discarded, never having experienced a loving hand or family of their own.

Conclusion

When you choose to use your voice, you are speaking for those who have none. Keep pressure on lawmakers, businesses, friends, and family to ensure that animal welfare is **always** a primary consideration. Punitive measures should be taken against animal abusers, so make sure the laws in your state reflect your opinions and beliefs for sentencing guidelines and animal abuse registries.

Thank you for reading *How to Speak for Paws*. I hope you enjoyed the information and learned something in the process that you can share with friends and family. I welcome all new and fresh ideas on how to use your voice to speak for paws.

Please sign up for my blog, ISpeakForPaws.com, to ensure you get updates on important issues in the animal world. You can also sign up for my daily news round-up of animal-related stories, [I Speak for Paws Daily](#). Let's have a conversation! Like and follow me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

I have a voice, and I Speak for Paws!

Thinking about adopting a pet of your own, or know someone else who is considering pet adoption? Look for my next booklet on pet adoption and pet care, coming soon!