

Pro Zoos Arguments

Pro 1: Zoos educate the public about animals and conservation efforts.

As of Mar. 2025, there were 238 accredited zoos in the United States. The zoos attract over 183 million visitors annually, which is more than the approximately 98.6 million spectators of games played in 2023–24 by the MLB, NBA, NFL, and NHL combined.

According to a study of 26 zoos worldwide published in *Conservation Biology*, visitors to zoos increased their knowledge of biodiversity and specific individual actions to protect biodiversity.

“Zoos provide people, especially impressionable children, with the opportunity to see these remarkable animals up close. People won’t protect what they don’t love, and they can’t love what they don’t know. No matter how closely programs like *Planet Earth* depict animals, nothing will match the bond of seeing them in real life. Just look at a child’s eyes at the zoo when he or she encounters a tiger or similarly majestic animal,” says Robin Ganzert, president and CEO of American Humane.

Pro 2: Zoos produce helpful scientific research.

In all, 228 accredited zoos published 5,175 peer-reviewed papers between 1993 and 2013. In 2017, 173 accredited U.S. zoos spent \$25 million on research, studied 485 species and subspecies of animals, worked on 1,280 research projects, and published 170 research papers.

Because so many diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans, such as Ebola, hantavirus, and bird flu, zoos frequently conduct disease surveillance research in wildlife populations and their own captive populations that can have a direct impact on human health. For example, the veterinary staff at the Bronx Zoo alerted health officials to the presence of West Nile virus.

Zoos and zoo research are used in other ways, too, such as informing legislation like the Sustainable Shark Fisheries and Trade Act, helping engineers build a robot

to move like a sidewinder snake, and encouraging minority students to enter STEM careers with workshops and programs.

Pro 3: Zoos save species from extinction and other dangers.

Corroboree frogs, eastern bongos, regent honeyeaters, Panamanian golden frogs, Bellinger River snapping turtles, golden lion tamarins, and Amur leopards, among others, have been saved from extinction by zoos.

Zoos are also working to save polar bears, tigers, and wild African elephants from habitat loss, apes and rhinos from poachers, dolphins and other whales from hunters, and bees and butterflies from population declines, among many other efforts to help many other animals.

According to researchers, 23% of birds and 47% of small mammals (weighing less than about 2.2 pounds) are being harmed by climate change. By keeping populations of animals and conducting wild repopulation, zoos can help preserve species in danger from climate change. There were only 9 California condors in the wild in 1985. However, by 2016 a joint conservation effort between the San Diego and Los Angeles zoos with other organizations had increased the population of condors in the wild to 276 and in captivity to 170.

Przewalski's horses, the last wild horses, were declared extinct in the wild in the 1960s when about 12 lived in zoos. By 2018, breeding programs at zoos had increased the number to 2,400 horses, and 800 were reintroduced to the wild.