

PETER BATTEN, LIVING TROPHIES: A SHOCKING
LOOK AT THE CONDITIONS IN AMERICA'S ZOOS
(NEW YORK: THOMAS Y. CROWELL) 1976.

In his recurring search for a suitable zoo to house properly his private collection of animals from South America and Indonesia, Peter Batten found that, contrary to assurances from one American zoo director that his animals once in residence would be well treated, they, in fact, were not. Shocked by their maltreatment just six weeks after their arrival in 1973 at this zoo, he decided to investigate conditions at other American zoos through mailed questionnaires and personal inspections. Living Trophies is the result.

This book, with its many photographs, draws attention to the unfortunate fact that zoos as presently constituted in the United States often fall short of the ideal, much to the harm and the detriment of the animals in their care. Batten appeals to the general public, zoological societies, and dedicated keepers to become involved in efforts to improve the living conditions of captive animals. He condemns most zoo directors, veterinarians, exhibit designers, animal traders and breeders, strongly implying that because of their ignorance, arrogance, and outright self-interest, they fail to learn and apply even the most elementary animal husbandry practices. Neglect, cold and hot weather, under- and over-feeding, monotony and neuroses in great apes, poor exhibit design, vandalism, illness, injury and premature mortality are a few of the topics critically examined here.

The author alleges that many zoo directors are unqualified for their positions, that many are political appointees, and that not all veterinarians make good zoo directors. He laments that the USDA (US Department of Agriculture) inspectors under the Animal Welfare Act, who should be concerned with animal well-being, are often totally unqualified and powerless. Even some so-called wildlife experts, he says, "are exploiting the animals' plight to personal advantage" (page 5). He suspects that the Institute of Animal Resources of the National Research Council might be

courting zoos as a source for potential laboratory stock. Further, some old and discarded zoo animals often find themselves on farms where they can be shot down by a "great white hunter," who has paid for the privilege. And the animals are not receiving much help from HSUS (Humane Society of the United States) either, in its plush quarters paid for by abundant contributions from a well-meaning, but mostly uninformed public.

The final chapters consider the need to improve animal management and care in principle, how local zoos may be evaluated, brief appraisals of a majority of American zoos (stressing current shortcomings and deficiencies), and a listing of minimum requirements and standards for the care and welfare of captive animals.

While many of Batten's facts are self-evident, indisputable, and often documented elsewhere in the literature, his tone is emotional and his indignation is interspersed throughout the book. His is a frank attempt to arouse the sensibilities and good will of the reader in reaction to deplorable conditions affecting the welfare and the quality of life of animals. Moreover, he tends to generalize from specific instances of animal neglect and mismanagement discovered in a particular zoo to condemn the entire plant, often overlooking adequate and proper procedures underway at the same location. For instance, Batten criticizes with reason the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans, unaware that plans were in process then which have since reached a significant level of fulfillment in the improvement of conditions scored by him. Nevertheless, when the rare occasion arises in his "personal view" of American zoos, he grudgingly mentions a few zoos that pass strict, though just, muster.

Admitting that Batten's standards and ideals are often beyond widespread realization, given fiscal and other criteria bearing on the problems considered, his book invites us all to examine more closely the likely future facing our nation's zoos and the animals in their care.

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