

# Animals as Photographic Props

The use of animals, particularly wild animals, for tourist souvenir photos, is undesirable and whether it takes place in a zoo, hotel or on the beach, it should be discouraged.

These animals may be taken from the wild, or purchased from breeding facilities or zoos and although lucrative for the handler, for the animal, there are severe consequences for their welfare and survival. Commonly found in such situations are wild cats, primates, reptiles and birds.

## Letting the cat out of the bag



Wild cats are often separated from their mothers days after being born, then hand-reared. This deprives the offspring of its mother's milk, which can lead to nutritional deficiencies. Most wild cats stay with their mothers for 18 months in the wild. Whether wild-caught or captive-bred, these

animals have naturally wild behaviour and therefore the risk of danger is always there. Those who use these animals as photo props are known to de-claw, remove teeth, chain and/or drug the animals to make them safe to handle. At six months old, wild cats are almost fully grown, too dangerous to handle, no longer cute and usually outgrown their use. The animals are usually disposed of to a slum zoo, a circus or often killed. The owner will seek a replacement young animal.

## Giving a monkeys

Apes and other primates are either separated from their mothers days after being born, then hand-reared, or they are orphaned on their mothers being killed. With many similarities to humans, primates are often made to wear clothes, intake alcohol or smoke cigarettes and perform other human behaviours for entertainment purposes. Like the wild cats, they are also wild animals, are unpredictable in nature and could not only inflict severe physical injuries, but may also transmit harmful diseases.



## Crocodile tears

Crocodiles, snakes, lizards and turtles are all from the reptile family and harbour diseases like Salmonella, which can infect humans when the animals are handled. Most reptiles are cold-blooded and therefore have limited physiological means of keeping the body temperature constant. Temperature fluctuations, and particularly low temperatures, can therefore be harmful, particularly if removed from their natural environment.



Many reptiles are venomous or potentially lethal predators. Baby crocodiles are born ready to kill as they have to fend for themselves from day one. They have their mouths wired or taped shut to make them safe for handling.

## Sick as a parrot

Birds will often have their wings clipped (cutting off the wing feathers) or pinioned (the amputation of the end joint of the wing) to prevent flight, temporarily or permanently. The inability of flight and the close proximity and handling by humans is extremely distressing for the birds, which is not only a risk of injury for the handler, but may also result in the bird developing abnormal behaviour, such as self-mutilation. Like reptiles, birds also harbour Salmonella.



The use of animals as photographic props is only acceptable when the animal is not handled, tethered, abused, mutilated or made to perform unnatural behaviour. An example of acceptable practice might be when riding a camel, horse or elephant, or on standing beside the animal. Photographs should be taken without a flash.

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