Keeping Snakes in Captivity and Selling Snakes

Keeping snakes in captivity is wrong to me if there is not active research being done that can help the species and/or help mankind. If you’re a biologist keeping snakes for research – great. If you’re milking them to create antivenin, great. Otherwise, if you have a snake at home in a cage and it’s just sitting there day after day while you feed it things it would never eat in the wild – then, I don’t get it. There is no good point to it. I don’t like it. I think it sucks.

Isn’t it time you asked yourself why you have a snake in your house that isn’t doing anything beneficial for you, humanity, or for the snake.

If it’s money – just admit it. Is there no other way to make money for yourself except by the exploitation of wild animals that cannot voice their own opinion?

Since I had a hermit crab as a ‘pet’ back in my pre-teens, I haven’t kept anything like a wild animal as a pet. I think the main reason people keep exotic animals as pets is that they are lacking something inside. They’re lacking something that makes them special and they want people to look at them in a different way. Some use snakes as a pair of balls they never had to begin with. They buy venomous snakes and BANG! – instant set of balls in the eyes of their friends. But they’re phony balls. Like dog Nutticals. You ever see those? Big balls you could buy for your dog if he had little ones and was having an identity crisis. Snakes and lizards, frogs, crabs, centipedes, scorpions, they’re all the same – fake balls for the owner so he/she feels like somebody.

As children, we did silly shit so people looked at us. Some adults haven’t had enough of that. Some adults still crave
attention, they never stopped doing things to get other people’s attention.

Look at guys (and women) riding Harley Davidson motorcycles. They could ride any other motorbike that is quieter and less imposing on others, and yet they spend tens of thousands of dollars on the loudest bike on the planet. And, it’s not just that. They could buy a muffler for any motorbike that makes it scream just as loud. But that would be cheesy, uncool. They buy the Harley because it’s sanitized loudness with a deep roar. It has become accepted over the years to spend truckloads of money on a bike that supposedly embodies some American ideals. One ideal is the freedom to piss off the masses as you go wherever you choose to go riding a 120db screaming machine that could just as well be a silent bicycle for most trips.

“Hey look at me! Nobody would turn their head and look at me if I wasn’t on this bike, but now you’re looking – aren’t ya? I’m so cool because I have this loud bike. I am cool, right?”

So, it’s a bit of the same with snake owners. They don’t feel like they’re cool enough. They want to be seen as risky, someone living on the edge of danger.

“Hey, look at me, I have a black mamba in my house. I’m risky, right? Did you see my baby king cobras? You know what? I have to force-feed them tails from baby mice because they won’t take whole mice. Hard to be cooler than that, right? You have a what? A Gaboon Viper? Where’d you get that? How much? I’m going to look into that. That’s really cool. Hey, am I cool with this mamba though?”

To me the whole thing is ridiculous and I don’t get it. Snakes, in their natural environment cover hundreds of square meters, acres, or miles, during their lives. Some snake owners think by putting their snake in boxes that are twice as big as that which is “recommended” by snake “care sheets” is really
generous and doing the best they can for the animal.

Really, it’s a move that makes sense only monetarily or emotionally for the snake owner. The snake doesn’t receive some massive benefit by having another 6 cubic feet of space in a tank. Don’t fool yourself that you really care.

Nobody that I know raises dogs or cats in a box 6 feet long, and makes them stay there except for a forced feeding of something they don’t like.

Why? They’re cats and dogs, they roam. They need space. For some reason, human beings – even snake owners – seem to be able to understand that dogs and cats need space, and they give it to them. Some are able to roam the house, some are able to go outside for an hour to run around and terrorize other cats and dogs that can’t get off a leash or can’t get out of the house.

Snakes? They’re put in glass boxes to look threatening. The most interesting thing they do all day is piss next to their water dish.

Now, if there was a good reason for them sitting there – that’d make it easier for me to understand. In most cases there is no good reason at all. The snake lays there. It gets fed once every couple of days – assuming the owner remembers to feed it. It’s 100% dependent on the owner to take care of it. The substrate is usually paper or something else the snake would never see in the wild. Paper filled with ink. When the snake eats, it can ingest the paper and chemicals.

The food is almost always something else – a substitute. The plants, rocks, branches, often times it’s ALL completely fake and doesn’t resemble anything in the snake’s natural environment in the wild. The space, is far too limited. The temperature and humidity variations of the outdoors cannot possibly be reproduced in captivity.
What about sunshine? Some snakes never see sunshine.

“It was raised in captivity.” Is a favorite saying among people that put snakes in cages to rot. They use this as an excuse for many things. Like an animal that was raised in a box without anything it would enjoy in the wild doesn’t need ANY of it.

Some use this excuse to feed the snake whatever the hell they want to feed it, even force-feeding it to ensure their ‘investment’ grows bigger and can mate and produce young snakes they can sell to repeat the process.

In the United Kingdom I read that it is against the law to feed snakes live animals! WTF? It’s like the entire world doesn’t Get It.

Wind, sun, temperature and humidity variations, smells in the air, evading predators, drinking from all different sources of water – rain dripping off leaves, streams, puddles… snakes in captivity have none of the variation of their natural environment. To me it looks like they have none of the LIFE they should have. It has been taken away because somebody wants to plop them in a tank because it makes the owner look better to friends, or different, somehow more interesting to other people than he or she would be without having reptiles in cages.

There was a time, maybe thirty years ago when I was in my late teens when I would have said it was fine to have fish, snakes, turtles, lizards, geckos, spiders, centipedes, and just about anything other than birds – in cages.

Why was it OK? I guess I didn’t care. I didn’t have the capacity to think about what animals should have. Now that I’ve seen 25 monocled cobras drown at a time, their heads cut off with scissors, and their skins prepared with salt to be shipped to Bangkok, I’ve been thinking about it more. Now that I’ve seen 30 king cobras at a time be sold off to restaurants
in Bangkok or bound for China, I have a different point of view. I started to think about – what should a snake, or any living thing, have a right to?

Seems to me that any living organism should have a right to live life as it would naturally in the wild. I understand that research needs to be done because it can help mankind advance in many areas. There may be a cure for cancer or some other disease within snake venom, snake bile, snake bone… who knows? I am all for sacrificing a few dozen or even hundreds of snakes per year for the greater good.

Keeping reptiles or any animal in a cage to enhance your ego and your place among your peers isn’t a good reason. This isn’t respecting animals’ lives, welfare, and right to live as they would in the wild. I’ve seen man take wildlife out of the wild for just selfish purposes – to help payoff a new sport utility vehicle. It’s rampant. It’s worldwide.

It’s about money in most cases. Look at those clowns at SnakeBytes TV on YouTube, which they’re now calling “AnimalBytes.” Check out this header on their channel – a photo of a wild cat and the words, “Videos for Animal Lovers by Animal Lovers.”

Animal WHAT? You’ve gotta be kidding me. One noted snake researcher we all know and love, but who shall remain nameless here, referred to what they’re doing as “bordering on crimes against nature.”

These “animal lovers” have thousands (tens of thousands?) of snakes, lizards, and geckos, crammed into little shoebox sized plastic drawers where they live their lives with no air from the outdoors, no sunshine, no interaction with any other living organisms except some of their own kind, flat paper substrate, no living plants, no insects, no seasonal changes, and crawling through store-bought dirt if they’re lucky enough to get some. It’s an absolute tragedy what these ‘animal
lovers’ are getting away with, and government agencies are fine with it. Nobody speaks up for the animals.

I’m sure everything they’re doing is according to code or they wouldn’t be there. Still, is it RIGHT? Isn’t there a moral question that needs asked here?

**Brian at SNABEBYTES – Are you an animal LOVER or EXPLOITER?**

**Reader – are you benefitting the species by keeping your snake or other wildlife at home in a box? How? Are you benefitting mankind? How? Is there some greater good that justifies what you’re doing?**

You’ve got to ask yourself these questions.

Exploiting animals which cannot express any input into their situation is exactly what SnakeBytes TV is doing. They’re breeding pythons primarily so they get different colors and patterns. That’s why a python sells these days, for how exotic it looks sitting in a glass aquarium.

This million dollar plus company hatches-out thousands of snakes per year so people can pay outrageous money for them to sit in a glass cube on a shelf in a house.

If these guys LOVE THE ANIMALS, what about those people that don’t? I mean, is there someone worse than these idiots for animals?

Unfortunately, yeah there are. There are plenty of meatheads that don’t know the first thing about setting up a proper environment for the animal they purchase, and it dies within a week. Are there controls to prevent absolute nimrods from buying animals online or at a market? Any IQ test? Any background check?

Nope. Any dumbass with a $100 bill can go buy a snake and stick it in a cage and feed it whatever they choose. Maybe it
will survive, and maybe it won’t. If it does, they think they’re great pet owners. If not, they just buy something else and try again. No big deal, it’s only money.

It’s a sick reality. Human beings become someone different, someone special, by keeping exotic animals in a glass box so their friends can walk by once a week and marvel at the colors or watch you force-feed it something it would never see in its natural environment. That’s why wildlife is in captivity. Great reason to keep animals captive, right?

I have asked a good number of people that keep snakes and reptiles why they do it. Most had thought about it some, but nobody had the right answer. Nobody had given it enough thought. The right answer is, and some would realize, it’s an ego trip for most people. It’s an instant pair of balls that makes the wildlife owner feel like he or she is somebody now because they didn’t feel like anybody before. Like a tattoo. Like a crazy shirt. Like a sports car. Like a Harley. Like a crazy haircut.

“Hey, look at me – now I’m somebody, right?”

OK, well there it is. I’m sure not everyone will be happy with my take on the situation, but that’s how I see it.

Here is a really great comment I received, that I turned into an essay and post here instead of leave it down in the comments section. See the response to this article – here.