

“These animals are important ambassadors for wildlife conservation.”

– Kristin Vehrs, Executive Director, Association of Zoos and Aquariums



Elephant show at AZA-accredited Six Flags Discovery Kingdom



In Defense of Animals

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) claims elephants in zoos are ambassadors for conservation, but AZA standards allow them to be treated more like POW's than diplomats.

Did you know . . .

- AZA standards allow zoos to cram two 7,000-10,000 pound elephants into an outdoor enclosure the size of a tennis court and an indoor space the size of a handball court.
- AZA standards do not prohibit the use of chains, bullhooks, and electric shock in the handling of elephants.
- AZA standards allow zoos to separate three-year old elephants from their mothers. (In the wild, elephants nurse for four years; females stay with their mothers for life, and males remain with the herd well into their teens).
- AZA accredits facilities like Six Flags Discovery Kingdom (see cover) that give elephant rides and present circus-style shows.
- Elephants are the only species in zoos to be routinely chained (or habituated to chaining) and managed through force, physical punishment, and use of the bullhook.
- Over 60 percent of zoo elephants have foot disease and nearly half have arthritis; these painful conditions are the leading cause of euthanasia.
- Of the 56 elephants who died in AZA-accredited facilities since 2000, fewer than half reached their 40th birthday; in contrast, an elephant's natural lifespan is 60-70 years.
- It is at least 50 times more expensive to maintain elephants in zoos than to protect equivalent numbers of elephants in the wild.
- Zoos will spend in excess of \$200 million on elephant exhibit renovations that still will not provide nearly enough space to accommodate the needs of earth's largest land mammal.

Don't you think zoos can do better?

www.helpelphantsinzoo.org