

WHITE PAPER



ON

ANIMAL CAPTIVITY

TOPIC: FROM NATURAL HORIZONS TO RESTRICTIVE
ENCLOSURE: ASSESSING SENTIENCE, AUTONOMY, AND
LAW IN MODERN CAPTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the methodological and ethical tension inherent in studying birds & ornamental fishes and within a captive setting. Using a mixed- method approach, the paper synthesizes a literature review of psychological stress makers along with field audits in Agra, India and case studies to evaluate compliance with the legislative framework. Scientifically, the data revealed that the wild-caught species suffer from higher mortality rates and chronic stress compared to captive-bred counterparts. The paper concludes by proposing an ethical shift and moving from anthropocentric approach of management and possession to a peaceful environment rooted in harmony and inter-species community.

INTRODUCTION

The term “captive animals” encompasses any species subjected to temporary or permanent confinement. In modern day and age, birds and fish have become common symbols of this status, frequently transitioning from their vast natural habitats to restricted wire cages or glass boxes of our living spaces. The shift is increasingly driven by a surging global desire for ownership, further fueled by distorted social media portrayals that frame these creatures as mere decorations. While these animals are often kept for human pleasure, the reality of their existence is concerning. Domestic environments rarely replicate the complex ecological structures under which these species are involved. For birds, the denial of long-distance flight can lead to muscle and psychological damage. Similarly, for fish, the cost of living in tiny tanks results in chronic stress and high mortality.

Despite robust legislative frameworks, significant legal vacuum remains, particularly regarding the trade and possession of exotic species. There is a friction between our desire to possess nature and our ethical obligation to respect the complex biological and psychological needs of sentient beings held in captivity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- To examine the concept and scope of animal captivity and its historical development.
- To analyse the impact of captivity and wildlife trade on biodiversity, animal welfare, and public health.
- To study the ethical dimensions of captivity through the concepts of sentience and speciesism.
- To study the prevailing practices, public attitudes, and growing trends related to captive animals and exotic pet trade.
- To evaluate the existing legal framework governing animals held in captivity in India and other nations
- To propose recommendations for improving the protection and welfare of animals kept in captivity.

MEANING OF CAPTIVITY

Captivity is defined under the Prevention of Cruelty Act, 1960, as the state of an animal being confined, whether temporarily or permanently, and barred from escaping by appliances or physical restraints like pinioning.¹ In a biological and ethical sense, captivity represents a total loss of autonomy for a sentient being, who loses the freedom to choose their own social groups, food, movement, or territory.² This state is different from that of domestic animals, which have been tamed over generations to serve human purposes, many wild animals in captivity are only one or two generations removed from the wild and remain physiologically and behaviourally like their wild counterparts.³

The state of confinement is deeply rooted in speciesism, which is the unjustified disadvantageous treatment of individuals based on their species membership.⁴ This human centric or anthropocentric approach often treats animals as “living jewels”⁵ or decorative objects,

¹ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, No. 59, Acts of Parliament, 1960 (India).

² World Animal Protection, Animals Are Not Entertainment – Dark Truth Behind Captive Wildlife Attractions, WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION BLOG (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://www.worldanimalprotection.org.in/blogs/animals-are-not-entertainment-dark-truth-behind-captive-wildlife-attractions/>

³ Shawn Peng & Donald M. Broom, The Sustainability of Keeping Birds as Pets: Should Any Be Kept?, 11 ANIMALS 582 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11020582>

⁴ Oscar Horta, What Is Speciesism?, ANIMAL ETHICS, <https://www.animal-ethics.org/speciesism/>

⁵ Supra note, 2

prioritising entertainment, profit, or convenience over the fundamental right of a creature to exist in its natural habitat. There is also a growing movement towards acknowledging the rights of animals in captivity. In 2013, Costa Rica announced plans to close zoos to phase out confinements,⁶ while documentaries like *Blackfish* have raised global awareness about the effects of captivity on species.⁷

SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this study includes a wide range of industries where animals are held in confinement. It specifically examines the illegal bird trade in India, which saw an estimated 25,850 birds seized from trade between 2010 and 2020, with parrots being the most victimised family.⁸ The research further covers exotic reptile pet trade, documenting at least 84 species in Indian trade, including highly venomous Gaboon vipers and threatened species like the Radiated tortoise.⁹ Additionally, it also studies the welfare of nearly 2,500 captive temple elephants¹⁰ in India, the millions of animals held in the world's 10,000 zoos,¹¹ and the large scale of fish stocking, where between 35 and 150 billion finfish¹² are raised in hatcheries annually.

⁶ Christine Dell'Amore, *Costa Rica Closes Zoos—Where Will the Animals Go?*, NAT'L GEOGRAPHIC (Aug. 7, 2013), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/130805-costa-rica-animals-zoos-environment-world>

⁷ Zoos and Aquariums, BORN FREE USA, <https://www.bornfreeusa.org/campaigns/animals-in-captivity/zoos-and-aquariums/>

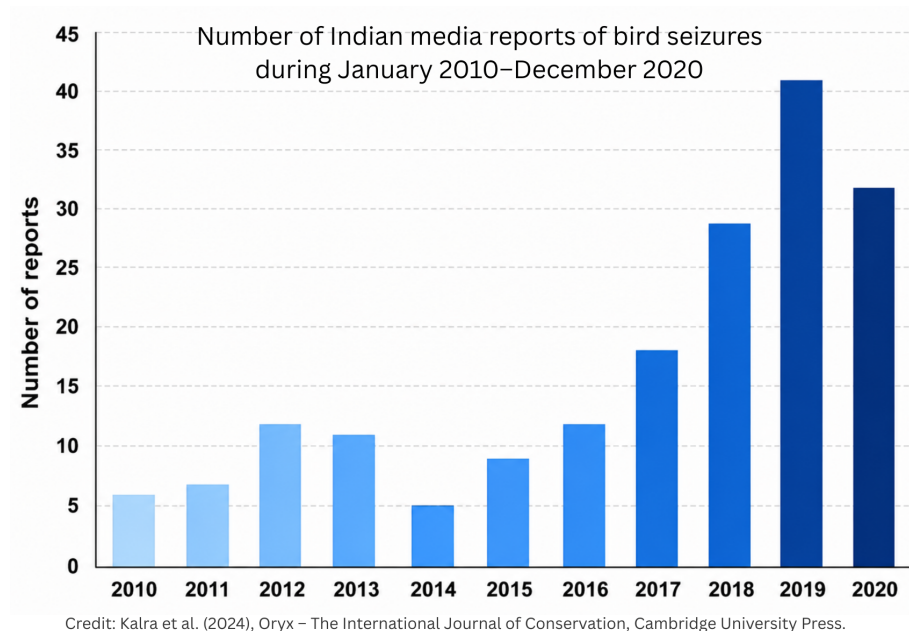
⁸ Sharda Kalra, Alisa Davies, Rowan O. Martin & Asha Poonia, *Insights from the Media into the Bird Trade in India: An Analysis of Reported Seizures*, 58 ORYX 69, 69–77 (2024).

⁹ A. Pragatheesh, V. Deepak, H.V. Girisha & Monesh Singh Tomar, *A Looming Exotic Reptile Pet Trade in India: Patterns and Knowledge Gaps*, 13 J. THREATENED TAXA 18518, 18518–18531 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.6998.13.6.18518-18531>

¹⁰ *A Holiday Camp for India's Captive Elephants*, BBC NEWS (Jan. 30, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51294477>

¹¹ *Supra* note, 2

¹² Saulius Simcikis, *35–150 Billion Fish Are Raised in Captivity to Be Released into the Wild Every Year*, RETHINK PRIORITIES (Apr. 2, 2019), <https://rethinkpriorities.org/research-area/fish-raised-in-capacity-and-released-wild/>



IMPORTANCE OF TOPIC

The topic is of special importance due to its devastating impact on global biodiversity and human safety. The trade in birds solely is responsible for threatening one-third of all endangered wild bird species. Recent news highlights a “mutating crisis” where exotic pets become invasive species.¹³ If we look at a recent example of May 2023, when the Alligator gar, native to North America, was discovered in Kashmir’s Dal Lake, posing a threat to native fish populations.¹⁴ The carnivorous fish was likely discarded by the owner when it outgrew its aquarium, threatening native species in the lake. This highlights a mindset where animals are treated like disposable trash once they become inconvenient.

A very similar example is of Red-eared slider turtles, often sold for low prices, are listed among the world’s 100 worst invasive species and have been found in River Godavari and Kerala’s canals after being discarded by owners.¹⁵

¹³ Jose Louies & Madhumay Mallik, A Mutating Crisis: India Is Becoming a Hub for the Growing and Changing Business of Illegal Wildlife Trade, DOWN TO EARTH (Mar. 3, 2025), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/a-mutating-crisis-india-is-becoming-a-hub-for-the-growing-and-changing-business-of-illegal-wildlife-trade>

¹⁴ Id

¹⁵ Madhavi Rangaswamy & Uttara Mendiratta, Good Intentions and Exotic Pets – Never a Good Mix: The Dilemma of Keeping Exotic Pets – Are Our Policies and Messaging Adequate?, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOC’Y–INDIA (Oct. 17, 2025), <https://india.wcs.org/Newsroom/Blog/ID/24467/Good-Intentions-and-Exotic-Pets-Never-a-Good-Mix>

If we see beyond ecological collapse of these actions, the trade poses significant zoonotic disease risks; captive reptiles and birds are known reservoirs for Salmonella, psittacosis, and influenza, which can infect human owners and poultry. As urbanisation rises, exotic animals are increasingly treated as status symbols, driving a multi-billion-dollar market that fuels international criminal syndicates. Furthermore, there is a lack of biosecurity measures in these trade networks that puts local communities at high risk of pathogen transmission.¹⁶

CONNECTION TO WELFARE

The connection between captivity and animal welfare is most clearly seen in a psychological condition known as Zoochosis.¹⁷ Living in stressful and unstimulating environments changes the brain of captive animals and leads to stereotypical behaviour involving repetitive, functionless actions such as pacing, head-bobbing, and self-mutilation that are never observed in the wild. Examining the scientific evidence reveals chilling evidence of this suffering. For example, the socially isolated African grey parrots have been found to have significantly shortened telomeres, a biological indicator of extreme stress and early aging.

The welfare crisis begins long before the animal reaches a home. The mortality rate for wild-caught birds is between 75% and 90% during capture and transit due to suffocation, thirst, and sometimes “sheer panic.”¹⁸ In addition to this, captivity fails to meet basic ethological needs. For instance, birds in small cages are often unable to fly at normal speed for even five seconds, leading to muscle wastage and osteoporosis. Similarly, temple elephants often spend their lives in chains, isolated from the complex social bonds that are essential to their emotional health.

CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

❖ Sentience

Sentience simply means that animals can have feelings, both positive and negative, and possess a range of needs resulting from the functional systems that make life possible. Sentient beings are not merely biological machines, rather they have the ability to feel pain, fear, stress, and loneliness, and they also possess a level of autonomy that is seriously compromised when they

¹⁶ Supra note, 7

¹⁷ Julie Cappiello, Zoochosis: The Cruel Reality Behind Captivity, BORN FREE USA BLOG (May 22, 2025)

¹⁸ Supra note, 2

are held in confinement. As Charles Darwin said- “*There is no fundamental difference between man and animals in their ability to feel pleasure and pain, and happiness and misery.*”¹⁹

The emotional and cognitive complexity of birds is often underestimated. Research indicates that parrots are highly intelligent (corvids) and have brain function superior to most monkeys.²⁰ In the wild, they have big families, mate for life, share parenting tasks, and call wildly to flock mates if separated. When denied these social bonds in captivity, 10% of the parrots develop feather-plucking behaviours as a coping mechanism for boredom and stress.²¹

Even fish are known to be sentient. Every year, between 35 and 150 billion finfish are raised in crowded hatcheries for stocking purposes. Evidence suggests that species like the Zebrafish can feel things five days after birth, as they respond to noxious stimuli in the same way adults do.²² Even sensitive species like the Delta Smelt show signs of stress and variable survival when transitioned from temperature-controlled hatchery water to semi-natural wild conditions.²³ The indicators of stress include repetitive swimming, circling, or floating listlessly. Fish often lose interest in food, hide in corners, or adopt unusual postures. Scrapping against objects is a big red flag for emotional distress or physical pain caused by a restricted environment.

❖ Speciesism

Speciesism is defined as the unjustified treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species, typically humans.²⁴ It is a form of discrimination conceptually identical to racism or sexism, where the interest of one group over the fundamental rights of another.

¹⁹ Brendan Christopher, Animal and Human Dignity (The Two Go Together), MEDIUM (Dec. 13, 2021), https://medium.com/@brendanchristopher_27398/animal-and-human-dignity-55080541f2bd

²⁰ DONALD M. BROOM, SENTIENCE AND ANIMAL WELFARE 200 (CABI 2014).

²¹ Rhianne Chalmers, Jonathan Cooper & Beth Ventura, What Are the Priority Welfare Issues Facing Parrots in Captivity? A Modified Delphi Approach to Establish Expert Consensus, 33 ANIMAL WELFARE e54 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1017/awf.2024.57>.

²² Jose Louies & Madhumay Mallik, A Mutating Crisis: India Is Becoming a Hub for the Growing and Changing Business of Illegal Wildlife Trade, DOWN TO EARTH (Mar. 3, 2025), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/wildlife-biodiversity/a-mutating-crisis>

²³ Melinda R. Baerwald et al., Captive-Reared Delta Smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*) Exhibit High Survival in Natural Conditions Using In Situ Enclosures, 18 PLOS ONE e0286027 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286027>.

²⁴ Supra note, 4

Examples of speciesism can be seen in industries where animals are used for entertainment, profit, or convenience.

1. The Exotic Pet Trade- Rising urban incomes have fueled a demand for novelty animals, which are basically keeping and trading unconventional, exotic or wild animals as pets for entertainment purposes. They are also kept as status symbols. A recent study revealed that there are around 84 exotic reptile species in Indian trade, including highly venomous Gaboon vipers and threatened Radiated tortoises.²⁵
2. Zoos and Aquariums- There are an estimated 10,000 zoos worldwide holding millions of wild animals for commercial exploitation. While most of them have a conservation purpose, they actually prioritise the visitor experience and profit over fulfilling the complex behavioral needs of animals.
3. Temple Elephants- In India, nearly 2,500 elephants are used for religious ceremonies. In nature, these animals are social and walk 30 miles a day, but in captivity, they are often kept in chains all by themselves.²⁶

WHY CAPTIVITY IS HARD FOR SPECIES?

Captivating represents a total loss of freedom for a sentient being. Animals lose their autonomy to choose who they live with, where they go, or what they eat. Due to speciesism, humans feel entitled to confine animals that cannot match the complexity of the wild, such as orcas in tanks, the size of “bathtubs”²⁷ or parrots in cages where they cannot fly for even five seconds.

The illegal pet trade shows how bad this can be. In India alone, police seized 25,850 birds between 2010 and 2020. The dark reality is that for every bird seen in a pet shop, many more died to get it there. In fact, between 75-90% of wild-caught birds die from thirst, being squashed in small boxes, or panic before they are even sold.²⁸ In March 2024, authorities in Assam discovered 52 exotic animals smuggled from Indonesia, including babirusas and hornbills,

²⁵ Kiran Nagare & Awad Sange, Restricted Trade Practices and Conservation of Endangered Species in India: A Focus on Pune, 4 INT’L J. ADVANCED RSCH. SCI., COMM. & TECH. 416 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.48175/568>.

²⁶ Supra note, 8

²⁷ What the World Will Look Like for the Last Orca at SeaWorld, SEAWORLD OF HURT (June 29, 2016), <https://www.seaworldofhurt.com/features/last-orca-at-seaworld/>

²⁸ European Food Safety Authority, Animal Health and Welfare Risks Associated with the Import of Wild Birds Other Than Poultry into the European Union, 410 EFSA J. 1, 1–55 (2006)

hidden in inhuman conditions.²⁹ Captivity is not merely being physically restricted; it's about taking away everything that makes an animal's life worth living.

HISTORY OF CAPTIVITY

The history of animal captivity evolved from early subsistence- based management to the widespread modern pet trade. People have been living with and managing birds for much longer than most of us realise. Scientists found evidence in New Guinea that people might have been managing large birds called southern cassowaries as far back as 16,000 BC.³⁰ Even thousands of years ago, people liked keeping exotic animals. Macaw bones were found in Colombia from about 7000 BC in a place where these parrots don't live naturally, that means people caught them and brought them there.³¹

Pet parrots were first recorded in Brazil around 5,000 years ago, while the swan goose was managed in China by 5000 BC.³² By 4500 BC, figures suggest pigeon domestication in Iraq, and by the 1st millennium BC.³³ In 327 BCE, Alexander the Great introduced parrots to Europe from India. Wealthy Romans also hired teachers to instruct the birds in Latin. According to the Roman author Pliny, while being taught these birds were sometimes beaten with an iron rod since their heads were hard like their beaks.³⁴

After the Roman Empire fell, parrots became almost rare until Christopher Columbus brought Cuban Amazon parrots back from the Americas.³⁵ This led to a resurgence during the Age of Exploration (15-17th centuries). Explorers brought back animals for zoos (previously called menageries) and for cabinets to keep them as rare items for entertainment. The first record of a

²⁹ Ratnadip Choudhury, 52 Smuggled Indonesian Birds, Animals Rescued in Assam, 2 Arrested, NDTV (Mar. 29, 2024),

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/52-smuggled-indonesian-birds-animals-rescued-in-assam-2-arrested-5334363>

³⁰ Zooarchaeology of Managed, Captive, Tame, and Domestic Birds: Shifts in Human–Avian Relationships, 33 J. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RSCH. 587, 587–628 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10814-024-09206-5>.

³¹ Catalina M. Zorro-Luján et al., A Macaw (*Ara* sp.) in a Preceramic Site from the Sabana de Bogotá, Colombia, Dated to the Ninth Millennium cal BP, 32 LATIN AM. ANTIQUITY 57 (2021).

³² Zoë Selby, The History of Parrots as Pets, ASS'N AVIAN VETERINARIANS BLOG (June 10, 2024), <https://www.aav.org/blogpost/1787676/501762/The-History-of-Parrots-as-Pets>

³³ Domestic Pigeon, ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/domestic-pigeon>

³⁴ Matthew Norman, The Strange Things Alexander the Great Brought to Europe from Asia, GREEK REPORTER (Dec. 24, 2025), <https://greekreporter.com/2025/12/24/alexander-the-great-europe-asia/>

³⁵ Catherine Monaghan, The Avian Invasion: Exotic Birds in America, VASSAR STORIES (July 31, 2017), <https://www.vassar.edu/stories/2017/170731-parrot.html>

parrot being kept as a pet in the British Isles was in 1504 when King Henry III owned an African Grey parrot.³⁶

There was an inclination towards parrots because they were colourful, easily tamed, and survived the long sea voyages better than more delicate species. There was little information about the needs of parrots and many birds died in transit. Keeping pets became a trend in the 18th century. Madame du Barry, mistress of the king of France, was highly passionate about parrots and demanded to keep exotic pets, particularly parrots and monkeys.³⁷

The way we keep fish has changed from simple food ponds to glass tanks as we see today. The history of aquatic captivity began with ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks keeping fish in embankments for food. Goldfish keeping became a symbol of luxury during China's Sung Dynasty (960- 1279 AD).³⁸ A crucial moment occurred in 1850, when Robert Warrington³⁹ built the first balanced aquarium based on the plant-oxygen relationship.⁴⁰ This led to the opening of the first public "Fish House" at the London Zoo in 1853.⁴¹

The 19th and 20th centuries saw massive industrialization of captivity. Commercial ostrich farming flourished in South Africa after the invention of the artificial incubator in 1869.⁴² Advancements in technology, such as the 1908 invention of mechanical air pump and the 1950s introduction of flake food by Dr Baensch, transformed fishkeeping from a niche luxury to a hobby enjoyed by many households globally.

³⁶ Parrots in History, OMLET GUIDE TO PARROTS, https://www.omlet.co.uk/guide/parrots/the_different_types_of_parrot/history/

³⁷ Madame du Barry, CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES, <https://en.chateauversailles.fr/discover/history/great-characters/madame-barry>

³⁸ History of Goldfish, ABOUT GOLDFISH, <https://www.about-goldfish.com/goldfish-history.html>

³⁹ Rebecca Duffy, *The Age of Aquaria: The Aquarium Pursuit and Personal Fish-Keeping, 1850–1920* (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware 2018).

⁴⁰ A.S. Ganesh, Gosse: The Man Behind the World's First Public Aquarium, THE HINDU (May 21, 2023), <https://www.thehindu.com/children/gosse-the-man-behind-the-worlds-first-public-aquarium/article66841544.ece>

⁴¹ World's First Aquarium, LONDON ZOO, <https://www.londonzoo.org/zoo-stories/history-of-london-zoo/worlds-first-aquarium>

⁴² Vanessa Barends-Jones & Louw Pienaar, *The South African Ostrich Industry Footprint* (W. Cape Dep't of Agric. 2020)

In India- The history of animal captivity in India is rooted in the ancient religious and cultural traditions, especially concerning birds. The Yajurveda (1200-900 BCE) contains some of the earliest references to parrots being kept as pets, also noting their unique ability to mimic speech.⁴³ Additionally, the Rigveda (1500-1200 BCE) identifies the bird as *Thiththi*, crediting it with healing properties. Over the millennia, parrots have become main figures in mythologies, such as the Jataka tales and Panchatantra, where they were celebrated as storytellers, teachers, and messengers. They were also considered high in regard, as *Kamadeva* (the God of Desire), used the parrot as his sacred mount.⁴⁴

This practice also had a significant global impact. In 327 BCE, Alexander the Great's army introduced Indian Parrots to the West, resulting in the first scientific descriptions by Aristotle. By the time of the Roman Empire, talking Indian parrots were a major symbol among the royals, who even employed teachers to instruct them. In India, this tradition took various forms, including the 12th-century *Sukasaptati* (Seventy Tales of the Parrot) and the modern practice of local astrologers using caged parrots to select tarot cards for predictions.

Unlike the bird keeping history, the hobby of keeping fishes as pets is relatively a recent development in India, officially beginning with the opening of the Taraporewala Aquarium in Mumbai in 1951. Today, this has evolved into a large industry, with India contributing around 500 million fish annually to the global market, particularly from the North-East and Western Ghats.

CAPTURING AND TRANSPORTATION

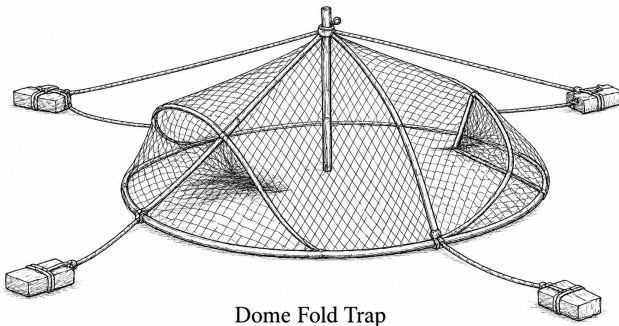
Birds are captured using various traditional and modern methods that often prioritize efficiency over animal welfare. Traditional methods often involve bird lime, which is a mixture of tree sap and oil resulting in a thick adhesive applied to branches to immobilize birds upon contact. Decoys are also used, such as female birds to lure males into sticky traps⁴⁵. In India's *Kamrup*

⁴³ Aditi Shah, The Parrot's Tale, LIVE HISTORY INDIA (Jan. 2, 2018), <https://livehistoryindia.com/story/snapshot-histories/the-parrots-tale>

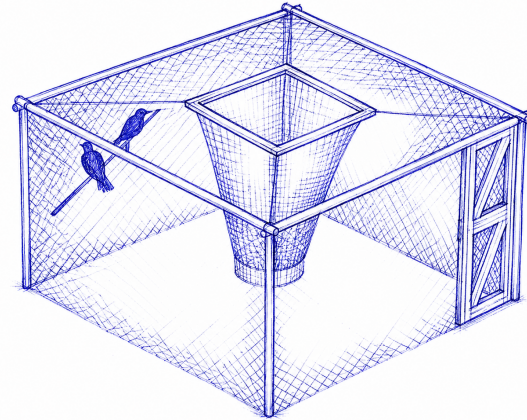
⁴⁴ *Id*

⁴⁵ Katrine Eldegard, Marianne W. Furnes, Matthew J. Grainger, Børge Moe, Brett K. Sandercock, Geir A. Sonerud et al., *Effects of Capture, Marking, and Tracking on the Welfare of Wild Birds*, VKM Rep. 2024:03 (Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment 2024).

district, there are species-specific traps that are used, such as pole traps for Water cocks, closed dome-shaped traps for Egrets, and cage traps for Doves.⁴⁶ For scientific research, triangular funnel traps are frequently arranged along shorelines to catch shorebirds as they feed.



Dome Fold Trap



Triangular Funnel Trap

There are aggressive methods too. This includes shooting with air guns, catapults, or *takkva* (pointed needle-like spears). Trappers also utilise mist-nets, which are nearly invisible and entangle flying birds, often causing stress and broken wings.⁴⁷ Furthermore, they also raid habitats to steal birds, like parakeets, directly from their nests.⁴⁸ Although the term ‘nest-breaker’ was coined by Scottish naturalist Douglas Dewar to describe predatory birds, it is often used for humans trapping these birds.

The transportation of these birds is typically inhumane to avoid legal detection. Birds are often crammed into wire or bamboo baskets and loaded onto trains for inter-state travel. Smaller shipments may be hidden even in shoe boxes.⁴⁹ For instance, migratory birds have been found transferred into mosquito nets or cane baskets. Throughout transit, these birds suffer from extreme dehydration, stress, and injuries, leading to high mortality rates.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Girindra Kalita, Traditional Bird Traps of Kamrup District, Assam, India, 22 ZOOS' PRINT J. 2678, 2678–79 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.11609/JoTT.ZPJ.1548.2678-9>

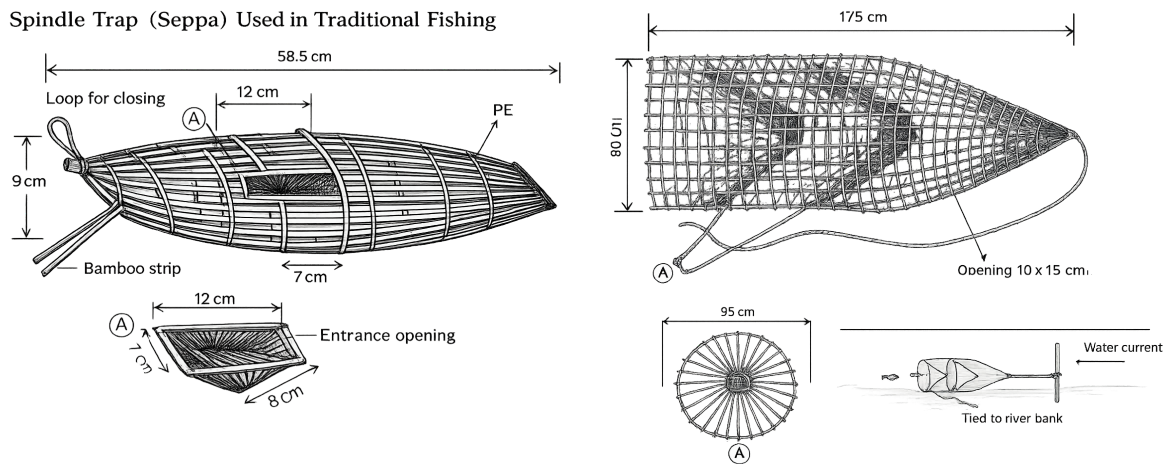
⁴⁷ Trapping Birds, BEAUTY WITHOUT CRUELTY INDIA, <https://bwcindia.org/Web/Awareness/LearnAbout/TrappingBirds.html>

⁴⁸ *Id*

⁴⁹ Richa Sharma, Birds of Different Feathers Trapped Together, THE HINDU (Apr. 24, 2022), <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/birds-of-different-feathers-trapped-together/article65348343.ece>

⁵⁰ Supra note, 46

Similarly, fish are captured using fuel-efficient devices designed to attract organisms for food and shelter without allowing escape. In inland regions like Assam, these traps are primarily created from split bamboo and include cylindrical designs like the *Seppa* or box traps such as *Darki*.⁵¹



Specific catching techniques exploit fish behaviour. Aerial traps catch jumping species by placing hurdles that force them out of the water into nets or rafts. Shelter traps lure fish into artificial habitats made of shrubs and twigs before being lifted from the water. In shallow areas, there are plunge baskets like the Polo that are pushed into mud to impound fish. Baits such as brown mussels and shrimp heads are frequently used to lure target species. Dugout canoes are used to reach marine grounds, and the live catch is periodically removed from the traps and taken to landing sites for commercial sale.

The illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion-dollar global industry driven by the demand for sentient beings to be sold for profit. A critical element of this trade is “wildlife laundering,” as it involves poachers capturing animals from the wild and falsely claiming them as captive-bred to sell it legally.⁵² Recent investigations highlight a loophole, where animals are smuggled under the guise of legal transfers between rescue centers. For instance, multiple distributions of endangered mountain gorillas and chimpanzees from the Congo were recently red flagged for being

⁵¹ P. Pravin, B. Meenakumari, M. Baiju, J. Barman, D. Baruah & B. Kakati, Fish Trapping Devices and Methods in Assam—A Review, 58 INDIAN J. FISHERIES 127, 127–35 (2011)

⁵² Annika Mozer & Stefan Prost, An Introduction to Illegal Wildlife Trade and Its Effects on Biodiversity and Society, 3 FORENSIC SCI. INT'L: ANIMALS & ENV'TS 100064 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsiae.2023.100064>

smuggled into private facilities in India using illegal permits.⁵³ The journey from wild to cage is horrific with mortality rates during capture and travel. Even those who survive the journey are often found in appalling conditions suffering from extreme stress and physical injuries.

IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is the living structure of our planet, but it is currently facing a concerning decline. Many people believe captivity helps to save endangered animals, but the research suggests it often does more harm than good to global biodiversity.

Firstly, capturing wild animals for breeding programs can weaken nature. Research shows that wild individuals, like salmon, have much higher death rates in captivity (57%) compared to those born in cages (36%).⁵⁴ When these animals (caught from the wild) die, we lose the strongest genes that nature needs to survive. Similarly, in the aquarium trade, 73% of fish die just from stress of being caught and moving from the sea.⁵⁵

Secondly, zoos often provide a false security valve. To keep a species healthy enough to evolve, over 2500 individuals are required, yet most zoos only hold a handful.⁵⁶ These animals are rarely released back to the wild, and when they are, the sudden shock to the ecosystem can overwhelm local resources and cause further biodiversity loss. Lastly, the demand for exotic pets ignites illegal trade that is now a bigger driver of species loss than climate change.⁵⁷ When these pets escape or are released, they become invasive species, like the Burmese python,⁵⁸ which destroys and disrupts native wildlife populations.

⁵³ Aathira Perinchery, NGO Flags Rise in Illegal Wildlife Trade Guised as ‘Zoo Transfers’, Including to India, THE WIRE (Mar. 29, 2025), <https://thewire.in/environment/ngo-flags-rise-illegal-wildlife-trade-including-to-india>

⁵⁴ Genki Sahashi, Captivity Costs: Wild Individuals Suffer Higher Mortality than Captive-Bred Individuals, 22 BIOLOGY LETTERS 20250548 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2025.0548>

⁵⁵ Biodiversity: The Gaping Hole in Zoo ‘Conservation’ Claims, FREEDOM FOR ANIMALS BLOG, <https://www.freedomforanimals.org.uk/blog/biodiversity>

⁵⁶ Id

⁵⁷ Sean L. Maxwell, Richard A. Fuller, Thomas M. Brooks & James E.M. Watson, Biodiversity: The Ravages of Guns, Nets and Bulldozers, 536 NATURE 143, 143–45 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1038/536143a>

⁵⁸ Michael E. Dorcas, John D. Willson, Robert N. Reed, Robert W. Snow, Michael R. Rochford, Michael A. Miller, Walter E. Meshaka, Paul T. Andreadis, Frank J. Mazzotti, Carlos M. Romagosa & Kenneth M. Hart, Severe Mammal Declines Coincide with Proliferation of Invasive Burmese Pythons in Everglades National Park, 109 PROC. NAT'L ACAD. SCI. U.S.A. 2418, 2418–22 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1115226109>

Public awareness regarding animals held in captivity is undergoing a profound ideological shift. Over the last several decades, society has shifted from an anthropocentric worldview toward a more eco-centric paradigm, which prioritizes ecological balance over human dominance. While zoos and aquariums attract over 700 million annual visitors, their existence is increasingly investigated due to rising moral concerns about confinement.⁵⁹

Research further reveals a disconnect between institutional missions and public perception. Though zoos claim conservation and research, visitors primarily value them as spaces for education and social recreation⁶⁰. However, the public is becoming highly responsive to welfare as visitors now identify repetitive behaviours for stress and animal abuse. For instance, the 2017 closure of Ringling Bros. Circus which resulted from relentless protest and over one million signatures on [Change.org](https://www.change.org/p/ringling-bros-circus-should-be-shut-down) urging an end to wild animal acts.⁶¹ This heightened awareness fuels a pull economy where consumers call for policy changes, such as California's ban on orca breeding⁶² and Asian elephant ride ban in Cambodia.⁶³ Despite this literacy, there's a difference between belief and behaviour, as many people adore animals but continue to keep them in captivity.

A notable example is the case against the Great Bombay Circus in Coimbatore in 2023,⁶⁴ where police registered a case, under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, for allegedly forcing dogs and exotic birds to act contrary to their natural behaviour without authorization from the Animal Welfare Board of India. This shows the continuing use of animals for pleasure despite growing public awareness regarding animal welfare.

⁵⁹ Ana Villarroja, Rafael Miranda, Andrea Pino-del-Carpio & María Casas, Social Perception of Zoos and Aquariums: What We Know and How We Know It, 13 *ANIMALS* 747 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13040747>

⁶⁰ Sam Donnelly, Animals in Captivity—The Growing Public Awareness, ONE GREEN PLANET (June 14, 2022), <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/animals-in-captivity-the-growing-public-awareness/>

⁶¹ The End of Ringling Bros. Is a Victory for Animal Protection Advocates, HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS (Jan. 19, 2017), <https://www.humaneworld.org/en/news/end-ringling-bros-victory-animal-protection-advocates>

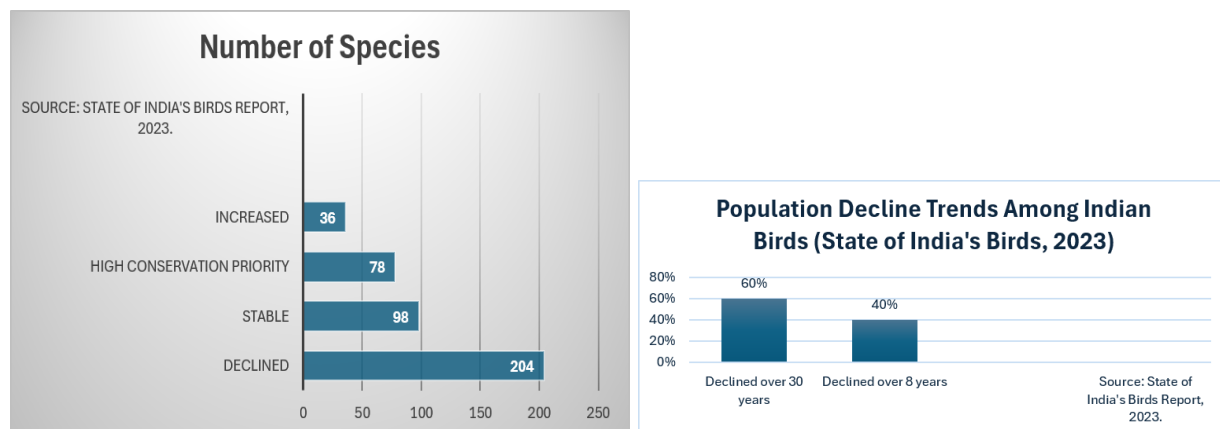
⁶² California Orca Protection Act, Cal. Fish & Game Code § 4502.5 (2016).

⁶³ Lilit Marcus, Cambodia to Ban Elephant Rides at Angkor Wat, CNN (Nov. 15, 2019), <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/angkor-wat-elephant-ride-ban-intl-hnk/index.html>

⁶⁴ ABP News Bureau, Case Against TN Circus Company Over 'Cruelty' to Animals, ABP LIVE (July 19, 2023), <https://news.abplive.com/tamil-nadu/circus-company-case-tamil-nadu-over-cruelty-to-animals-1616930>

FINDINGS FROM SECONDARY SOURCES

Secondary sources including NGOs reports such as PETA India, Wildlife SOS, Beauty Without Cruelty (BWC), etc. provide critical data on the scale of animal exploitation in captivity. The State of India's Birds Report, compiled by a coalition of 13 organisations, exposes that 60% of bird species have declined over the last 30 years.⁶⁵ PETA India provides a distressing truth of the trade. It revealed that for every bird that reaches a market alive, nine others die during trapping and transportation.⁶⁶ BWC estimated that 8,000 birds are illegally trapped daily in India, making it roughly 7,000 in total annually.⁶⁷ Specific secondary reports highlight the Amur falcons 1,20,000 in number are killed annually in Nagaland and the thousands of birds killed by glass-coated kite strings during festivals.⁶⁸

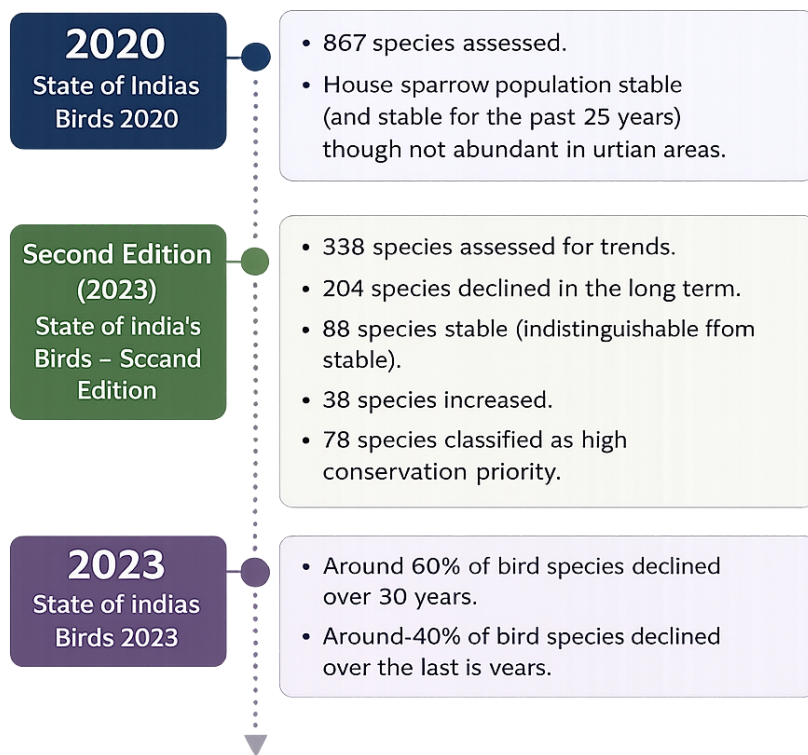


⁶⁵ The SoIB Partnership, *State of India's Birds, 2023: Range, Trends, and Conservation Status* 119 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11124589>.

⁶⁶ Sriya Narayanan, A Cry from the Wild, FRONTLINE (Sept. 24, 2010), <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30181869.ece>.

⁶⁷ Trapping Birds, BEAUTY WITHOUT CRUELTY INDIA, <https://bwcindia.org/Web/Awareness/LearnAbout/TrappingBirds.html>.

⁶⁸ Shreya Dasgupta, India Moves Rapidly to Protect Amur Falcons from Mass Hunting, MONGABAY (Sept. 13, 2013), <https://news.mongabay.com/2013/09/india-moves-rapidly-to-protect-amur-falcons-from-mass-hunting/>.



There are further reports of systematic torture of dancing bears and monkeys, who often have their teeth and are pierced repeatedly. It also suggests that India's porous borders make it possible for a lucrative black market to exist for tiger parts used in traditional medicine to flourish.⁶⁹

Aquatic studies estimates that 20-24 million fishes are captured annually for display.⁷⁰ In the Philippines, 70-90% fish are caught using a chemical named sodium cyanide, leading to a 75% mortality rate within just two days of capture.⁷¹ Additionally, 2/3rd of coral fish die during translocation due to shock and poor handling. These crises continue because the conviction rate for wildlife crime remains below 1%.⁷²

⁶⁹ Supra note, 56

⁷⁰ Fishes and Birds Kept for Leisure, ANIMAL ETHICS, <https://www.animal-ethics.org/fishes-birds-kept-leisure/>

⁷¹ Id

⁷² Ravindra Kumar, Combating Money Laundering Associated with Wildlife Crimes in India, WILDHUB (July 31, 2022), <https://wildhub.community/posts/combating-money-laundering-associated-with-wildlife-crimes-in-india>

OBSERVATION FROM THE FIELDWORK

Fieldwork was conducted between May and June 2026. The observation method involved a 45-minute assessment of housing standard and animal behaviour, which also included a data collection process involving interview with the pet shop owner regarding sourcing and care protocols.

Owners stated that animals are primarily sourced from breeders in Kolkata and Madras. Birds are primarily fed Kangni (foxtail millet). Further research revealed that such seed-based diets are often nutritionally deficient, lacking essential vitamins and amino acids like methionine and lysine.⁷³ While they provide medication for drowsy individuals, they admitted that fish frequently fall ill due to contaminated water, which is only cleaned weekly.

A total of 80 animals were observed including budgerigars, cockatiels, and various ornamental fish. Living conditions were inadequate as birds were kept in small cages outside the shop in scorching heat and traffic noise. The cages were small that prevented flight, a direct violation of Rule 3(3)(b) of the Pet Shop Rules, 2018. Rabbits were housed in cages with wire flooring causing physical discomfort and restricted natural hopping. These environments fundamentally fail to secure the Five Freedoms, specifically to express natural behaviour.

CASE STUDY

➤ The illegal bird trade at Delhi's Kabutar Market

The Kabutar (Pigeon) Market near Jama Masjid, Delhi, serves as a notorious hub for the illegal trafficking of native birds. Despite a 1990-91 ban on the trapping and trade of Indian wild birds, a series of major raids, most recently in August 2025, exposed the continuous brutality of this flourishing trade.⁷⁴

⁷³ N. Harcourt-Brown, *How to Recognize, Treat, and Prevent Nutritional Diseases in Parrots*, in Nutritional Diseases in Parrots, VETERINARY INFORMATION NETWORK (VIN), <https://www.vin.com/doc/?id=3846188>

⁷⁴ Large-Scale Illegal Trade of Birds Exposed in New Delhi, WILDLIFE SOS NEWS (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://news.wildlifesos.org/large-scale-illegal-trade-of-birds-exposed-in-new-delhi/>

Acting on PETA India's complaint, the Delhi Police and Forest Department seized 1,741 native birds, including 500 chicks, from illegal poachers.⁷⁵ The species that were seized included Alexandrine, Rose- ringed, and Plum- headed parakeets, alongside hill mynas, munias, and buntings. Many of these birds were smuggled across borders from different states, making Delhi a central transit point.

Conditions of Captivity- The birds were in horrific conditions, crammed into suffocating, filthy cages or stuffed into cloth bags. Rescued birds suffered from eye infections, severe dehydration, and physical injuries. To attract buyers, poachers had dyed munias in vibrant colours using harmful chemicals. This trade is dangerous as an estimated 60% of birds die during transit due to broken limbs, thirst, and other serious diseases.

The trade violates the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Hill mynas are protected under Schedule I, while parakeets fall under Schedule II. Furthermore, caging birds in a manner that prevents flight is a punishable offense under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Many rescued birds were placed under the care of wildlife SOS for medical treatment and rehabilitation, while the other ones were eventually released back into their natural habitats in multiple phases.

➤ **Baghpat birds rescue**⁷⁶

In Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh, police and forest officials successfully rescued over 170 parrot chicks. These young birds, known as Rose-ringed and Alexandrine parakeets, were taken from forests in Rajasthan and were being driven via the Eastern Peripheral Expressway toward Delhi-NCR to be sold as pets. A joint team of police and the Forest Department acted on a specific tip-off and intercepted the shipment near the district borders, where smugglers hid the birds in cramped, unhygienic plastic crates. According to the sources, the birds, many of whom had not fully developed feathers, were found in a condition of extreme distress and dehydration.

The apprehended suspects were booked under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which classifies the trade of the indigenous species as a non-bailable offence. Currently, parrots are under

⁷⁵ *Id*

⁷⁶ Wildlife Trade in India: 170 Parrot Chicks Rescued, JUNGLE TAK (Apr. 10, 2026), <https://jungletak.in/wildlife-trade-in-india-170-parrot-chicks-rescued/>

professional supervision for medical care and rehabilitation. The Forest Department plans to release them into the wild once they are healthy enough to fly.

This incident brings into light the persistent challenges of the wildlife trade in India and the critical role of community vigilance in dismantling sophisticated poaching networks.

EXOTIC PET TRADE

There is a growing trend and appetite for exotic wildlife pets is surging in India, which is heavily supported by the social media platforms that present ‘cute’ but distorted views of wild animals.⁷⁷ In India, a huge scale of this trend was revealed by a government amnesty scheme, with 43,693 individuals declaring undocumented possession of species ranging from kangaroos to critically endangered femurs.⁷⁸

The impacts of this trade are destructive. There is extreme animal cruelty inherently involved. Animals are trafficked in horrific conditions, such as snakes stuffed in coke bottles or hundreds of iguanas crammed into small boxes.⁷⁹ Mortality rates are catastrophic as they sometimes exceed 90% within the first year of captivity or transit⁸⁰. Apart from this, traffickers perform brutal mutilation, such as forcibly pulling out toxic teeth of slow lorises, to make animals feel safe.⁸¹ Conservation suffers as species are pushed toward extinction through over-extraction; for every baby chimpanzee reaching a home, an estimated 10 others die during capture.⁸² African grey parrots have nearly vanished from Ghana due to this demand.

⁷⁷ Madhavi Rangaswamy & Uttara Mendiratta, Good Intentions and Exotic Pets – Never a Good Mix: The Dilemma of Keeping Exotic Pets—Are Our Policies and Messaging Adequate?, THE WIRE (Oct. 17, 2025), <https://thewire.in/environment/good-intentions-and-exotic-pets-never-a-good-mix>

⁷⁸ Jay Mazoomdaar, Declare Exotic Pets, Avoid Prosecution: How One-Time Scheme Works, INDIAN EXPRESS (Dec. 19, 2020), <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/declare-exotic-pets-avoid-prosecution-how-one-time-scheme-works-7101504/>

⁷⁹ Vivek Menon, India’s Growing Fetish for Wildlife of the Exotic Kind, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION TRUST, <https://www.wildlifeconservationtrust.org/indias-growing-fetish-for-wildlife-of-the-exotic-kind/>

⁸⁰ Annika Mozer & Stefan Prost, *An Introduction to Illegal Wildlife Trade and Its Effects on Biodiversity and Society*, 3 FORENSIC SCI. INT’L: ANIMALS & ENV’TS 100064 (2023)

⁸¹ Purva Variyar, India’s Growing Fetish for Wildlife of the Exotic Kind, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION TRUST, <https://www.wildlifeconservationtrust.org/indias-growing-fetish-for-wildlife-of-the-exotic-kind/>

⁸² Chimpanzees, DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION, <https://davidshepherd.org/species/chimpanzees/>

In terms of environment, exotic pets often become invasive species when unmanageable animals are released into the wild. The red-eared slider turtle is a true prime example, including the Burmese python, native to Southeast Asia, has ruined native prey populations in the Florida Everglades.⁸³

Furthermore, public health is also at equal risk. Unhygienic markets where various species are clumped together serve as breeding grounds for zoonotic diseases like Salmonella and SARS.⁸⁴ Ultimately, these wild animals are reduced to mere commodities, ignoring their complex intellectual and psychological needs.

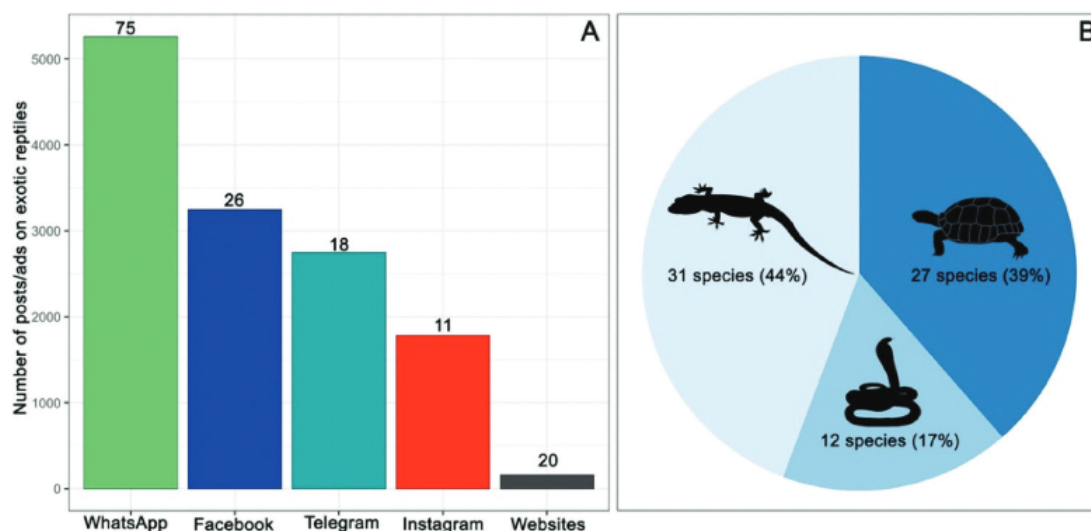


Figure 1. Summary of exotic reptile pet trade detected online, between 2018–2020: A—Number of posts/ads in various social media platforms and trade websites, number of groups monitored in each platform are labelled on top of each bar | B—Proportion of species in different groups (snakes, lizards & turtles) of reptiles recorded. Silhouettes are from PhyloPic.org contributed by Alex Slavenko (Lizard), V. Deepak (Snake) & Andrew A. Farke & Yan Wong (Tortoise).

Pragatheesh, A., V. Deepak, H.V. Girisha & M.S. Tomar (2021) A looming exotic reptile pet trade in India: patterns and knowledge gaps. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 13(6): 18518-18531. <https://doi.org/10.11609/JoTT.6998.13.6.18518-18531>. © Pragatheesh et al. 2021. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

⁸³ Emma Farina, Florida vs. the Burmese Python: How an Invasive Giant Is Changing the Sunshine State, FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY EARTH SYSTEMS BLOG (Oct. 14, 2025)

⁸⁴ Mohammad A. E. Hasan, Impact of Open Markets on Zoonotic Threats and Antimicrobial Resistance: A One Health Concern, 20 ONE HEALTH 101228 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.onehlt.2025.101228>.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

India's animal welfare gains legitimacy from the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960,⁸⁵ which establishes the Animal Welfare Board of India and defines the duty of care for a person who is in charge of an animal. This law criminalises many actions, including beating, overloading, cruel transport, and maintaining animals in restrictive cages that do not permit natural movement. Then there is the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972,⁸⁶ that protects indigenous species from capture and trade. Despite these robust frameworks, Indian legislation has faced significant obstacles. For instance, the penalties under Section 11 of the PCA Act are extremely low, often starting from just ten rupees, which fails to serve as a modern deterrent.⁸⁷

Indian courts have occasionally taken progressive stances through judicial activism. In the landmark case of *Abdulkadar Mohamad Azam Sheikh v State of Gujarat (2010)*,⁸⁸ the court ruled that the birds have a fundamental right to fly in the open sky. The court found that keeping birds in small cages with clipped wings constituted illegal confinement affirming that citizens have a duty to ensure animals do not suffer. Similarly, in *People For Animals vs Md Mohazzim & Anr (2015)*,⁸⁹ It was held that the birds have the right to live with dignity.

In 2025, a report by the Animal Law Cell under the Pet Shop Compliance Project, revealed shocking violations of the Pet Shop Rules, 2018 across eight zones of Delhi- Shahdara, Central Delhi, Rohini, Janakpuri, Uttam Nagar, Malviya Nagar, Khan market, and Burari.⁹⁰ Investigators found dead fish rotting in crowded algae-choked aquariums and goldfish stuffed into perfume bottles. Such conditions clearly violate the legal standards and display a lack of necessities.

⁸⁵ The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, No. 59 of 1960, INDIA CODE (1960).

⁸⁶ The Wildlife (Protection) Act, No. 53 of 1972, INDIA CODE (1972)

⁸⁷ Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, No. 59 of 1960, § 11 (India).

⁸⁸ *Abdulkadar Mohamad Azam Sheikh v. State of Gujarat*, Special Criminal Application Nos. 1635, 1636, 1670, 2600, 2601 & 2602 of 2010 (Guj. H.C. May 12, 2011).

⁸⁹ *People for Animals v. Md. Mohazzim & Anr.*, 2015 SCC OnLine Del 9508 (Del. H.C.).

⁹⁰ Animal Law Cell, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, *Media Coverage of the Pet Shop Survey by Animal Law Cell (2025)*,

<https://lawfaculty.du.ac.in/userfiles/downloads/25/Media%20Coverage%20of%20the%20Pet%20Shop%20Compliance%20Project%20by%20Animal%20Law%20Cell.pdf>

In contrast, the other nations have raised the bar significantly higher. Switzerland is recognised for having the most strict laws for animal welfare, including a ban on keeping hens in cages and stringent requirements for the freedom of cattle.⁹¹ Norway has a superior model by making it mandatory for citizens to help any injured animal they encounter, whether wild or domestic.⁹² Additionally, Germany⁹³ has uniquely elevated animal rights by including animal protection directly in its Constitution, ensuring animal welfare is not secondary to property interest or business.

The International landscape is also shifting towards acknowledging the “Rights of Nature.” In January 2022, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador issued a groundbreaking ruling in the case of Estrellita, a woolly monkey.⁹⁴ The court in this case held that the constitutional rights apply to individual animals, not just species, stating that animals must be protected for their intrinsic value rather than human needs. This led to a mandate for a new bill on animal rights.

To improve the framework, India must inculcate several international practices:

- Giving animals a constitutional protection just like Germany, that would prevent businesses taking precedence over welfare.
- While India restricts certain wild species in circuses, countries like Bolivia have implemented total bans on all animals in circuses. Similarly, countries like the UK and Croatia have banned all fur farming.
- To prevent the prevalence of pet abandonment, India should implement a mandatory electronic chip implantation and registration system for all pets, as seen in many Western countries.
- There needs to be legislative clarity for the protection of homeless animals, ensuring municipalities are legally obligated to provide care.

⁹¹ Animal Protection Ordinance (TSchV), SR 455.1 (Switz. 2008), as amended.

⁹² Dyrevelferdsloven [Animal Welfare Act], Act No. 97 of June 19, 2009 (Nor.).

⁹³ Germany, WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION ANIMAL PROTECTION INDEX, <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/country/germany>

⁹⁴ Rights of Nature and Animals as Subjects of Rights (Estrellita Monkey Case), Judgment No. 253-20-JH/22, Constitutional Court of Ecuador, Jan. 27, 2022

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the goal may be for these species to live only in the wild, the current persistence of the pet trade necessitates an urgent shift toward providing suitable conditions that acknowledge their sentience. Ultimate freedom is not an immediate prospect, but we must ensure these animals are kept in environments that fulfill their complex psychological and biological distress.

Famous veteran Dr. Sharman Hoppes emphasises that being an educated owner is extremely important because birds are high-maintenance pets that develop behavioural problems without proper social interaction and specialised diets.⁹⁵ In the same way, fish are mistakenly viewed as “easy” pets and often die prematurely because owners’ lack knowledge about complex water chemistry or bio-filters.⁹⁶ There is a need for formal recommendations to make sure these species receive ethical and scientific care rather than merely surviving in alien environments.

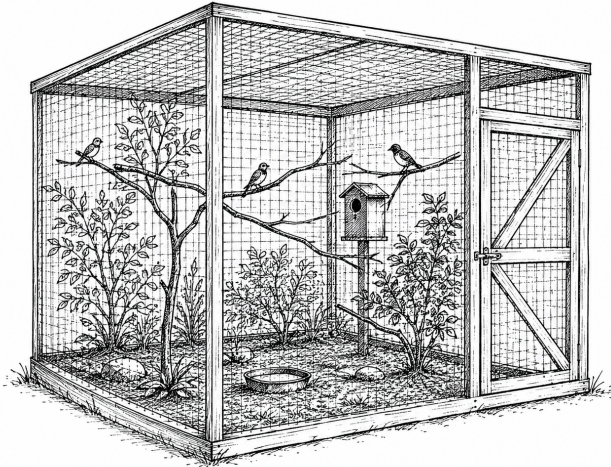
The following recommendations for keeping birds and fish in captivity:

For Keeping Birds

- Owners should avoid small cages and instead use large space used to house birds called avaries, that provide enough for at least five seconds of uninterrupted flight. For instance, for a bird flying at 30 km/h, this requires at least 4.8 meters space in diameters. Enclosures should also provide adequate vertical height and hiding places to reduce fear and prevent injuries.
- Since pets are social creatures, they should never be kept in isolation. They should be housed in pairs to prevent psychological distress, which can lead to abnormal behaviours.
- Bird owners must be educated on species-specific nutrition to prevent common disorders such as obesity, Vitamin A deficiency, and rickets. Solutions include providing fresh food daily and ensuring the proper balance of amino-acids and minerals.

⁹⁵ VMBS Marketing & Communications, Birds as Pets, TEXAS A&M COLL. OF VETERINARY MED. & BIOMEDICAL SCI. PET TALK (June 25, 2010), <https://vetmed.tamu.edu/news/pet-talk/birds-as-pets/>

⁹⁶ Rich Loh, Charlotte Walster, Natalie Saint-Erne & Enrico Rasidi, *The Appalling State of Pet Fish Welfare*, in WORLD SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS (2016).



Avaries

For Keeping Fish

- Consumers should avoid tiny tanks (one-half gallon or less), as they are not sufficient for any fish species and difficult to maintain, contributing to high mortality cases.
- A rapid shift in temperature, dissolved oxygen, or pH can overwhelm a fish's system. To prevent this post-water-change-shock, the new water temperature must be within 1–2°C of the tank temperature. In India, due to a hot climate, water should be changed in the early morning to avoid the extreme heat of overhead storage tanks.
- It is important to use a full-spectrum water conditioner that neutralizes both chlorine and chloramine. Standard dechlorinators often leave behind toxic ammonia when breaking down chloramine, which can cause chronic gill damage over time.
- Owners should never clean the filter on the same day as a water change as these tasks should be separated by at least a week to allow the nitrifying biofilm to recover. Biological media should only be rinsed in tank water and not tap water.
- Regular, modest water changes should be prioritised rather than large, infrequent ones. If there is an emergency that requires a massive water change, it should be done in smaller stages to lessen osmotic and chemical shock.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the lives of these captive animals forces us to confront a deeply rooted anthropocentric entitlement where sentient beings are frequently reduced to a mere commodity. Although human history has been defined by a desire to possess and manage nature, our growing scientific understanding of animal sentience, that matches other species, reveals an adaptive mismatch in our traditional relationship with these creatures. We are currently at a turning point in our collective consciousness, moving away from viewing animals merely as property to acknowledging their value as individuals with their own lives and social needs.

The true measure of our progress as a society lies not in how efficiently we can regulate the pet trade, but in our willingness to acknowledge and respect the autonomy of other species. Justice and moral righteousness demand more than better cages, rather it asks for us to consider whether it is truly ethical to keep a species that would never choose to remain if the door were opened. By aspiring to a peaceful society rooted in inter-species friendship and respect, we begin to fulfill our moral obligations.