



Captive Wild Animal Protection Coalition
P.O. Box 6944
San Carlos, CA 94070
www.cwapc.org

Chimps' Attack in California: Wild Animal Escape Rate Reaches All Time High

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Kim K. Haddad, DVM, Manager, CWAPC

Cell: 650-619-0628 Office: 650-595-4692 Fax: 650-595-4690

Email: info@cwapc.org Web: www.cwapc.org

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Yesterday's escape and subsequent fatal shooting of two chimpanzees is just the most recent tragic and preventable incident involving privately owned wild animals. Similar incidents are occurring at an alarming rate across the country. Chimpanzees also can carry many diseases including yellow fever, monkey pox, Ebola and Marburg virus, Foot and Mouth Disease, tuberculosis, herpes-b, and Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV); the primate form of HIV.

"This week a so-called sanctuary allowed four chimps to escape and had to kill two of them while they critically wounded a visitor. Last year, we rescued 39 tigers from another phony sanctuary. The man running it was convicted on 56 counts of animal cruelty and child endangerment. These places aren't sanctuaries, and it's time the government be held accountable for endangering animals and the public." Pat Derby, Director Performing Animal Welfare Society

The Captive Wild Animal Protection Coalition (CWAPC), representing more than 20 leading animal protection organizations, zoos and sanctuaries, believes keeping wild animals as pets is dangerous for people and inhumane for animals and warns that the rate of human injury and death from privately owned wild animals is increasing.

"This is what happens when there are no legally enforced sanctuary standards, and people are allowed to keep a collection of wild animals on their property and call it a "sanctuary." Both allowing people into the chimps' enclosure and working without safe capture devices was irresponsible and not in keeping with the running of a legitimate sanctuary." Vernon Weir, Director, American Sanctuary Association

Though the Captive Wild Animal Safety Act - passed in December 2003 – provides a federally-mandated definition of an "animal sanctuary," there are still no enforceable regulations for sanctuary standards. As a result, places like Animal Haven – and thousands of other facilities masquerading as sanctuaries in the U.S. – can call themselves sanctuaries without meeting enforceable standards to protect the animals and public.

Without legally enforceable standards of care, there is no way to distinguish between animal collectors, private owners and legitimate animal rescue organizations.

"Under current laws, it is too easy for a private citizen to have a backyard collection of wild animals and call it a "sanctuary." TAOS, in collaboration with CWAPC, is working to establish sanctuary standards so that incidents like this one don't continue to happen." Eileen McCarthy, Executive Director, The Association of Sanctuaries

CWAPC is calling for the enforcement of the legal definition of an "animal sanctuary" and the establishment of peer-reviewed sanctuary standards, their adoption and enforcement as the legal industry standards.

*In 2004, there were:

4 human adult fatalities	81 animal escapes
27 human adult injuries	307 animal fatalities
13 human child injuries	608 confiscated or displaced captive wild animals

*A list of incidents can be found at www.cwapc.org.