



## How to recognize a genuine wildlife sanctuary: Checklist for assessing captive wildlife facilities

### Where did the animals at the facility come from?

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ does not take animals from the wild unless they are injured and it is in the best interest of the animals to be moved to the sanctuary.
- ✓ does not engage in the commercial trade of animals or animal parts.
- ✓ does not breed animals and has measures in place to prevent breeding unless the animals are part of an authorized release program.
- ✓ does not take in more animals than it can handle humanely (animal welfare is not compromised through the addition of new animals; animals are not suffering from overcrowded conditions or lack of resources).

### What is the purpose of the facility?

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ does not use wild animals for entertainment, where animals are forced to perform unnatural acts (rides, shows, tricks).
- ✓ does not keep wild animals in captivity for the primary purpose of making a profit.
- ✓ exists to address a specific problem and is in the best interest of the animals (for rescue, rehabilitation, release programs).

### Does the facility rehabilitate animals for release into the wild?

Some sanctuaries may release rescued and rehabilitated animals as part of an official and properly managed program.

A good sanctuary which releases animals into the wild:

- ✓ restricts public viewing as this can habituate animals to people and threaten the success of the animal's reintroduction to the wild.
- ✓ follows international standards<sup>1</sup> for rehabilitation and reintroduction to ensure their efforts are not introducing diseases or threatening existing ecosystems.
- ✓ is following up as best as possible on the welfare of the released animals (to see if the animals have properly reintegrated into the wild environment, if they have been killed by other animals or if they are starting to venture into human settlements for sourcing of food).

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<sup>1</sup> The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has developed the most professional, globally-accepted standard to date. Their policies, guidelines and standards can be found here: [http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/publications/iucn\\_guidelines\\_and\\_policy\\_statements/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/publications/iucn_guidelines_and_policy_statements/)

**Does the facility have animal welfare standards? If so, what are they, who developed them and who assesses their compliance?**

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ must comply with strong animal welfare standards to ensure the physical and psychological welfare of all animals under its care. We recommend the standards developed by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS).
- ✓ should be inspected by third-party, independent animal welfare experts from another NGO or academic institutions.
- ✓ should be accredited by an independent professional association such as GFAS.

**Is the facility open to the public?**

If the animals are permanent residents and not suitable for release into the wild, a good sanctuary:

- ✓ does not remove animals from enclosures for exhibition (as this causes unnecessary stress for the animals), unless it is in the best interests of the animals (for a veterinary emergency, to protect the animal from a natural disaster).
- ✓ monitors and conducts public tours in a careful manner that minimizes the impact on the animals and their environment, does not cause them stress, and gives them the ability to seek undisturbed quiet privacy areas.
- ✓ prohibits non-guided tours and ensures that tour groups are of a size that allows for close staff monitoring.
- ✓ prohibits direct contact between the public and wild animals kept at the venue.

**Does the facility educate the public on animal welfare and conservation issues?**

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ provides an educational component to the visitation that benefits animals in the long-term.
- ✓ should clearly explain why the animals are in their care (why they were rescued) and provide information on their natural behaviour to explain why their welfare needs are best met in the wild.
- ✓ should have education programs to promote awareness, empathy, and respect for all life and use non-invasive education methods.
- ✓ should discourage the keeping of wild animals as pets and for entertainment.

**Does the facility have sufficient staff with adequate expertise to ensure the welfare of all the animals?**

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ has a sufficient number of staff and adequately supervised volunteers to provide humane care for all animals.
- ✓ veterinary care is available for all animals 24/7.
- ✓ staff and veterinarian(s) have expertise and training in the health and welfare of the animals under their care.
- ✓ has a euthanasia policy. Euthanasia is justified when there is no better option for an animal and it is determined to be in the best interests of the individual whose life is being ended.

## Does the facility have adequate resources to ensure the long-term care of its animals?

A good sanctuary:

- ✓ has a long-term financial plan.
- ✓ has a succession plan for its continuance should the director or other key management be unable to continue their positions.
- ✓ has an emergency plan in the event of natural or manmade disasters.
- ✓ has an exit strategy if efforts to protect the animals in the wild are successful and the sanctuary is no longer need.

## Definitions

**Animal welfare** refers to the physical and psychological wellbeing of an animal. The welfare of an animal can be described as good or high if the individual is fit, healthy, free to express natural behaviour, free from suffering and in a positive state of wellbeing.

**Euthanasia:** the act of inducing death in a humane manner.

**Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)** promotes and validates excellence in sanctuary management and humane and responsible care of animals through international accreditation, collaboration, mentoring. They have accredited and verified more than 130 sanctuaries around the world. Their standards were developed with the support of World Animal Protection and can be found here: <http://www.sanctuaryfederation.org/gfas/for-sanctuaries/standards/>

**Rehabilitation facility:** a facility that provides short-term care for animals rescued from need (injured, orphaned, sick) and prepares them for eventual release into the wild.

**Sanctuary:** a facility that provides life long or long-term care for animals rescued from need, including abuse, injury and abandonment.