



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Forget the neighbour's dogs and cats – are you living next door to some of the world's most dangerous wild animals?

From deadly snakes and crocodiles, to lions, leopards, bears and even an elephant - Born Free reveals that nearly 5,000 dangerous wild animals are being privately kept right here in the UK

A survey conducted by Born Free has revealed that 4,755 dangerous wild animals are being privately kept in the UK. Now the international wildlife charity is petitioning the UK Government to immediately review the law, and put a stop to some of the world's most remarkable but often deadly creatures being kept in unsuitable environments.

Confining these animals in domestic settings is not only cruel says Born Free, but can also pose a significant risk to human life.

Whilst there are an estimated 11 million people who own a pet in the UK, the survey - which asked every local council across England, Scotland and Wales which dangerous wild animals are currently licenced - revealed that a total of 710 private addresses are hosting dangerous animals. These include:

- Almost 300 wild cats, such as Servals and Lynx including over 40 big cats - lions, tigers, leopards, pumas and cheetahs
- Over 80 venomous lizards, such as the Mexican Beaded lizard and Gila monster
- Over 130 lemurs and 100 monkeys, particularly Ring Tailed lemurs and Capuchins
- Over 75 crocodilians, mostly Caimans
- Over 700 venomous snakes, including Puff Adders, Black Mambas and Diamondback rattlesnakes

In Wales there is an elephant licensed to be privately kept, and in England a giraffe, as well as 14 wolves, 3 bears, 9 leopards, 3 cheetahs, 9 lions and 9 tigers. Other species being kept as pets or in private collections in the UK included zebras, camels, fossas, antelope, and otters.

Currently, under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976, anyone in Britain can keep a dangerous wild animal as long as they obtain a licence from their local authority. The licence application merely requires them to demonstrate that their animals are properly contained and not at risk of escape.

Born Free is calling for a review of the legislation covering the keeping of wild animals as pets, including the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, and calling for more restrictions on the ownership of dangerous wild animals. This includes the need for consideration of large constrictor snakes, which do not currently require a licence to be kept as pets.

Just last year a man in Hampshire was killed by his 8ft African Rock python, Tiny. In a separate incident, Police found an illegally kept 4ft Caiman crocodile and 16 snakes at a property in Essex, nine of which were classed as dangerous. They included cobras, copperheads and pythons. Seven other snakes were found dead in the house as a result of the poor conditions in which they had been kept.

Whilst the survey includes those establishments and companies that require a Dangerous Wild Animals licence to rescue animals, for animals such as wild boar and ostriches on farms, and those who use animals for TV and film, it is still understood that a large proportion of the dangerous wild animals are being kept as personal pets.

Dr Chris Draper, Head of Animal Welfare and Captivity for Born Free, said:

“The keeping of wild animals as pets is a growing concern. The widespread use of the internet has made it easier than ever to ‘order’ or purchase a wild animal without clarification as to where it has come from or how it should be cared for. Wild animals are particularly vulnerable to welfare problems because of their complex social, physical and behavioural needs. They require specific housing conditions, dietary requirements, and furthermore, the safety risk these animals pose to their owners and the wider public should not be ignored.”

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

- High res images can be downloaded from <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/q83jFtGaFt>
- Interviews with Dr Chris Draper, Head of Animal Welfare and Captivity for Born Free are available upon request, please register your interest with Gemma Hook - gemma.hook@pmwcom.co.uk

About Born Free

Born Free's mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild.

Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

For all Born Free press enquiries please contact Gemma Hook:

T: 01403 783 400, M: 07920 820018, E: gemma.hook@pmwcom.co.uk

For all enquiries relating to Born Free's events please contact Victoria Lockwood:

T: 01403 246903 M: 07951 130624, E: victoria@bornfree.org.uk

Born Free Foundation | Broadlands Business Campus | Langhurstwood Road | Horsham
West Sussex | RH12 4QP | www.bornfree.org.uk | Charity No: 1070906

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