THE MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT WILD ANIMALS FALL/WINTER 2026

ANIMAL ISSUES DIGEST



ZOO CAPTIVITY: THE UGLY TRUTH

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BORN FREE USA

Keep Wildlife in the Wild®

PLUS

CELEBRATING WOMEN LEADERS IN CONSERVATION

ESTABLISHING WILDLIFE CRIME REPORTING HOTLINES

FIVE NEW FACES AT THE PRIMATE SANCTUARY

WELCOME

As we look ahead to the final months of 2026, I am reflecting on what a productive and successful year it has been for Born Free USA and the wildlife we serve.

In this issue, you will read about our conservation work in West Africa, where we are helping with marine conservation in Ivory Coast (page 3); working with local women leaders (page 4); and aiding wildlife law enforcement efforts via crucial trainings and new reporting hotlines in Ghana and Nigeria (page 5).

Back at home in the U.S., we are just as active. We have updated and expanded our virtual classroom pet program (page 6) and helped stop a harmful California bill that would have legalized owning certain primate species as pets (page 7). Our team is also hard at work investigating the nation's "top" zoos, collecting important evidence that demonstrates zoos do not serve the animal welfare, conservation, or educational purposes they claim (Cover Story, page 12).

At the primate sanctuary, we welcomed five new monkeys this year (page 8). I invite you meet the new monkeys and also watch our latest short film to get a behind-the-scenes look at sanctuary life (page 9).

This exciting and important work is only possible thanks to the ongoing support of compassionate animal lovers like you. In this issue, you will also find fun and creative ways to support our work.

Whether you donated, wrote to your lawmakers, or shared one of our posts on social media, our victories this year are yours, too. Thank you for all that you do for animals.



Warmly,



Angela Grimes
Chief Executive Officer
Born Free USA

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS ISSUE

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We work to ensure that all wild animals are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. We seek 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.

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WILDLIFE RESCUES DEMONSTRATE THE IMPACT OF BORN FREE USA'S WORK IN IVORY COAST

With support from Born Free USA, Ivory Coast authorities recently launched community outreach activities focused on the urgent need to protect critically endangered and threatened marine species along the Fresco–Sassandra coastline in the southwestern part of the country. The project seeks to improve early detection, reporting, and response to incidents involving stranded, injured, or accidentally captured animals, thereby reducing avoidable mortality.

Soon after the project was initiated, a baby West African manatee was found tangled in a fishing net. The calf was exhausted and unable to free himself. Authorities coordinated with the fisherman who discovered the manatee, and he agreed to care for the calf until he is big enough to be safely released. The fisherman has slowly been nursing the calf back to health with support from veterinary experts. The calf has made remarkable progress and has gained a significant amount of weight! When the calf is stronger, and once the nets have been cleared from the area, he will be returned to the wild where he belongs.

Not long after the manatee rescue, a critically endangered hawksbill sea turtle that had been accidentally trapped in nets was rescued by local communities. The turtle was thankfully uninjured and was quickly released back into the sea.

These two successful rescues in such a short space of time demonstrate community conservation in action! Local people make the best conservationists and once they are empowered to act they can make a huge difference.



Photo: Ivorian authorities with the rescued manatee calf.



Photo: A local fisherman nurses the rescued manatee calf that he rescued from a fishing net.

CELEBRATING WOMEN LEADERS IN CONSERVATION

The Born Free USA team works with remarkable West African women every day! We are proud to introduce our supporters to two of these wonderful women.

Jane Eyibo, Nigeria



Photo: Jane Eyibo (second from the right).

Jane is the Head of Programs and Partnership at a Nigeran NGO called Protect Earth Network. She has been implementing the Born Free USA project focused on reducing plastic pollution and providing women with training to produce plastic alternatives. Jane loves supporting initiatives that bring conservation closer to communities, particularly by creating opportunities for women and young people to participate and contribute to environmental solutions.

"Women are at the heart of their communities and have a deep understanding of local resources and environmental challenges. When women have knowledge, opportunities, and a voice in conservation, they can influence families and communities in powerful ways and create solutions that are more sustainable.

Thank you for believing that protecting wildlife is worth investing in. From Nigeria, I can tell you that support for conservation reaches real people and communities on the ground. Your solidarity gives local conservationists the confidence to keep doing this important work!"
– Jane Eyibo

Dr. Raïmath Bio Nigan, Benin

A pediatrician by training, Raïmath founded her own conservation organization in Benin called IPV. As a doctor, Raïmath has always been aware of the connection between health, the environment, and well-being, and decided to create an organization that could address these different aspects, with communities at the heart of the solution. IPV has been implementing Born Free USA projects focused on raising awareness of wildlife crime among local communities.


Photo: Dr. Raïmath Bio Nigan (right).

"When women are empowered, educated, and economically strengthened, they can become powerful agents of conservation.

Thank you for your trust and support. Your commitment shows that wildlife conservation is a collective responsibility that transcends borders. I hope we will continue to move forward together to protect species and build a better coexistence between communities and nature."
– Dr. Raïmath Bio Nigan

ESTABLISHING WILDLIFE CRIME REPORTING HOTLINES

Wildlife crime is causing untold damage to wildlife populations across West Africa, resulting in widespread poaching of numerous vulnerable species such as elephants, pangolins, grey parrots, marine turtles, and sharks. Organized syndicates responsible for these crimes deploy sophisticated techniques to prevent detection, such as using fraud, corruption, and complex financial accounting. Gathering criminal intelligence can therefore be a complex challenge; without detailed information alerting enforcement teams to criminal activity, uncovering the perpetrators may be impossible.



Intelligence Training for Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Forces in West Africa

Born Free USA has been providing intelligence training and mentoring to West African Wildlife Law Enforcement Task Forces (WLETFs) for several years. In 2024, we organized Human Intelligence (HUMINT) training for the WLETFs that comprised 13 modules designed to provide an insight into the different skills necessary to establish and successfully manage a Human Intelligence network program within the WLETFs.



HUMINT Hotlines

Despite these trainings, there remained a gap in their enforcement toolkit – the lack of a mechanism for informers to confidentially report crime.

To respond to this need, Born Free USA supported the establishment of HUMINT hotlines in Ghana and Nigeria. The use of hotlines such as these means that anyone can phone in anonymously and report wildlife crime without fear of reprisals. It also means that WLETFs are much more likely to be provided with actionable intelligence that they can quickly act upon to identify, apprehend, and prosecute criminals.

A public awareness campaign has also ensured that communities across each country are aware of the hotlines and how they operate. Born Free USA anticipates that this will encourage enhanced public engagement in and awareness of conservation initiatives, which will not only provide a mechanism for reporting crime but also create a deterrent against illicit activities.

ILLUSTRATING THE LIFE OF FREEMAN THE MONKEY FOR THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM PET PROGRAM

In preparation for the 2026-2027 academic year, Born Free USA team members visited Dallas over the summer to share our virtual monkey adoption program with teachers and school administrators at the Elevate Your Classroom conference. This conference gave us the opportunity to share our new (and completely free) adoption program with more than 4,000 young students and hundreds of teachers this year!

Following our 2025 report, *Teachers' Pets: The Exploitation of Wild Animals in the Classroom*, which detailed the issues associated with keeping exotic classroom pets including reptiles, small mammals, and fish in schools, we wanted to provide an ethical alternative to keeping live wild animals in classrooms that also protects human public health and safety.

The program, divided into six lesson plans, follows the life of Freeman; a real long-tailed macaque who lives at the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary since being rescued from life as "pet" over ten years ago.

Each lesson plan includes real photos and videos of Freeman and his monkey friends at the sanctuary and is followed with activities and discussion questions designed to keep kids engaged with the material and teach them the concepts that educators hope students learn from keeping live classroom pets, including compassion for the natural world, science, and animal ecology.

To help bring Freeman's story to life, we collaborated with viral comic illustrator ZooDraws, who has created a comic strip for each chapter of Freeman's life; starting with his rescue from life as a pet in cruel conditions to what his life looks like now, thriving at the primate sanctuary in south Texas.

To access our free virtual classroom adoption program on the Teachable platform, please visit bornfreeusa.org/virtualclassroompet.

EACH LESSON PLAN INCLUDES REAL PHOTOS AND VIDEOS OF FREEMAN AND HIS MONKEY FRIENDS AT THE SANCTUARY



A WIN FOR PRIMATES IN CALIFORNIA

This past August, Born Free USA helped defeat potentially devastating legislation that would have caused countless monkeys and humans in California to suffer. The proposed legislation attempted to allow certain primate species to be owned as companion animals, despite the private ownership of primates as pets in California being prohibited on the grounds of human public health and safety.

To help combat this legislation, we testified at the California Fish and Game Commission hearing, where we spoke about the life of suffering we have directly observed both pet monkeys and their human owners endure once primates reach maturity and behave according to thousands of years of evolution in the wild: aggressively and unpredictably.



While we continue actively working to ensure that national legislation to ban the private keeping of all primate species – like the Captive Primate Safety Act – passes in the future, we continue to fight the smaller, state-level battles until then. Every primate life saved from entering or remaining in the cruel primate pet trade still counts as win for us!



Get animal news, actions, victories, and more right to your email inbox as a member of Born Free USA's Wildlife Alert Team! Join today at bornfreeusa.org/getemail or scan the QR code.

FIVE NEW FACES AT THE PRIMATE SANCTUARY

Five new residents joined our primate sanctuary's population of more than 200 rescued monkeys. In April, we welcomed Rhesus macaque, Dylan, who had been confiscated from an illegal breeder. May brought us George and Nina, two vervet monkeys from a roadside zoo. July saw us welcome former "pet" long-tailed macaque, Meko. Jax the vervet then arrived in August having been kept as a "pet" in a private home.

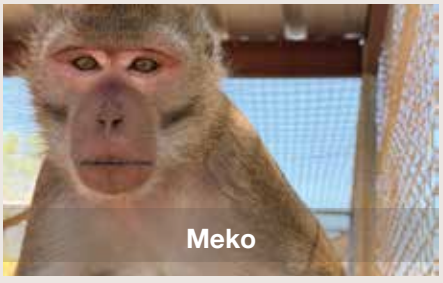

Dylan

All new arrivals must complete a quarantine period to ensure that they are healthy before they can be integrated into social groups. These first few weeks are not just about establishing health information, but they also give our team the opportunity to learn about the monkey's individual personality, likes, and dislikes. While housed away from other monkeys, those in quarantine can often see or hear other monkeys and the way in which they react to others of their own kind is very telling. Some monkeys are curious, some are excited, some are aggressive, and some are submissive. These cues help us to plan their next steps. Do we think they would do well in a group, or will they need to be housed in a pair or trio? Do we think they can move quickly into the socialization process? Do we think they might need time living close to, or alongside, other monkeys before they are ready to make friends? These questions are often answered for us in those all-important early weeks.


George


Jax

So far, all our newest arrivals are in the process of meeting other monkeys. Nina is already happily settled into a social group, while Dylan, Meko, and Jax are just starting to spend time with other monkeys, under the close supervision of our caregivers. George is taking a little longer than we had hoped to integrate but is working on safely interacting with other monkeys and we have hopes that he will do well once we find the right fit for him.


Meko

Recovering from their past is never an easy process for any monkey we work with, but we are committed to ensuring that everyone gets all they need to thrive in their new sanctuary home. We look forward to updating you on the progress of our newest arrivals as they continue to settle into sanctuary life!


Nina

SANCTUARY FOUND: WATCH OUR LATEST SHORT FILM!



Earlier this year, we released *Sanctuary Found: Inside One of America's Largest Primate Sanctuaries*, a beautifully filmed short documentary about life at the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary that follows members of staff as they go about their working day, including our veterinarian, Dr. Jennings, who explains the challenges that come with caring for so many monkeys.

If you have not yet hand a chance to watch the film, you'll want to check it out!

Join the growing community of hundreds of thousands of animal lovers who have already enjoyed this behind-the-scenes look at sanctuary life by visiting bornfreeusa.org/supportmonkeys or scanning the QR code.

YOUR GIFT CHANGES LIVES!

Hundreds of monkeys at our sanctuary have been given a beautiful gift – a second chance at life. A chance to make friends, receive loving care, and be free from harm. This powerful gift is made possible by generous, caring people like you.

Your donation can help us give the gift of safety to even more animals in need. Whether it's a monkey in need of rescue, an endangered wolf who needs protection from harm, or a manatee who needs us to save their ocean home, with your help we can make the future brighter for wildlife. Let your compassion transform lives. Be there for wildlife with your gift today.

Donate by using the enclosed envelope, by visiting bornfreeusa.org/magazine, or by scanning the QR code.

SHOW YOU CARE WITH

Give your loved ones a gift that really makes a difference this holiday season!



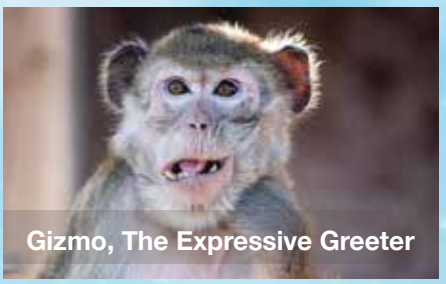
There are so many special monkeys at the Born Free USA Primate Sanctuary who need your support. For $7 a month or $60 for one year, you can help provide nutritious food, shelter, toys, loving care, and veterinary treatment to monkeys who have a second chance because of you. Monkey adoption packages come with a stunning photo of your adopted monkey along with his or her biography, a certificate of adoption, and a huggable plush toy.

Make a Difference for A Rescued Monkey...

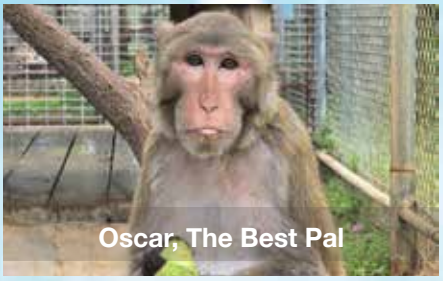

Willis, The Ball of Energy

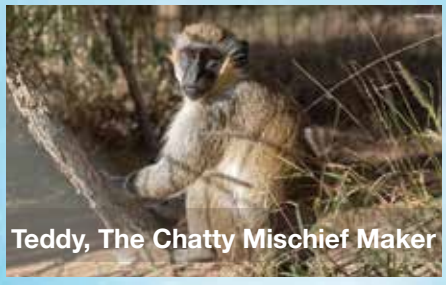

Buddy, The Robust Athlete

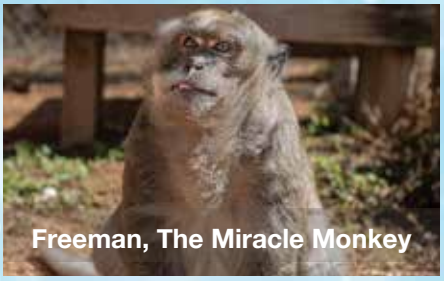

Kiki, Miss Independent


Gizmo, The Expressive Greeter


Marlin, the Calm Leader


Oscar, The Best Pal


Teddy, The Chatty Mischief Maker


Freeman, The Miracle Monkey


Peach, the Shy Sister

Go to bornfreeusa.org/adopt

AN ADOPTION GIFT!

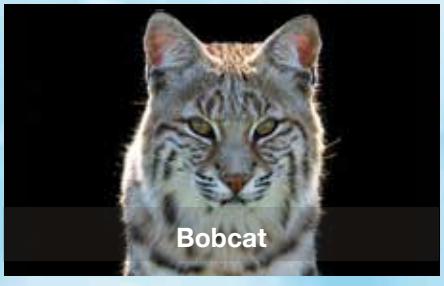
Give a gift that gives back!



With our symbolic wildlife adoptions, rather than sponsoring an individual animal, you will be making a difference for an entire species! For just $7 a month or $60 for one year, you can support Born Free USA's work to protect your loved one's favorite animal. Wildlife adoption packages come with a photo of your chosen species in the wild, a fun factsheet, a certificate of adoption, and an adorable plush toy.

Keep Wildlife in the Wild.



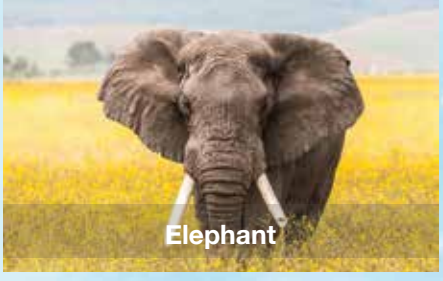


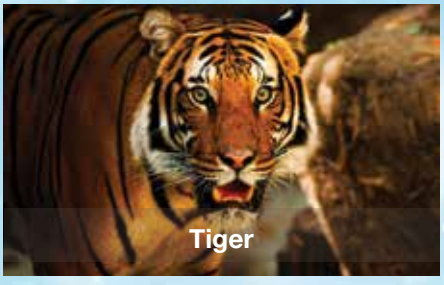


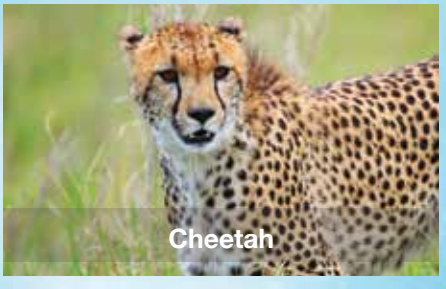












Or scan the QR code

ZOO CAPTIVITY: THE UGLY TRUTH

Since our last edition of *Animal Issues*, we have released three more pieces of our undercover zoo investigation. To date, we have examined The Audubon Zoo, the Bronx Zoo, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Honolulu Zoo, and San Francisco Zoo, with all the facilities falling short in some way.

Small enclosures, inappropriate social groupings, misleading educational messages, stressed animals, and apathetic visitors have been noted at every zoo we have visited. While some zoos do better than others in welfare provision, conservation contribution, and education, each one of them raised serious concerns that warranted closer consideration.

At the Bronx Zoo, elephants Patty and Happy languished alone in their sad prisons. Taken from her wild home as a baby, Happy had endured 20 years without company and had, in recent years, begun to suffer health issues that raised alarms among advocates. Like Happy, Patty was stolen from her family as a baby and sent to a zoo. She lived with other elephants until 2018, when her companion died and she has been alone ever since. Since the release of our report, Happy has died and pressure on the zoo to rehome Patty to a sanctuary has escalated. Calls are being made on zoo leadership to allow Patty to be moved to an accredited sanctuary to live out her days in peace. Concurrently, new legislation proposed by



SINCE THE RELEASE OF OUR REPORT, HAPPY HAS DIED AND PRESSURE ON THE ZOO TO REHOME PATTY TO A SANCTUARY HAS ESCALATED.

Photo: Patty the elephant at the Bronx Zoo.



THE ANIMALS THEMSELVES SUFFER A LIFETIME IN CAPTIVITY – LIFETIMES THAT SOMETIMES SPANS MANY DECADES – SO THAT THEY CAN BE MERELY GLANCED AT BY BORED SPECTATORS.

Photo: Lionesses at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo.

the New York City Bar Association would create rules so stringent as to effectively ban the keeping of elephants in captivity. While it is too late for Happy to benefit, if the law is successful there would be no more elephants subjected to miserable captive lives in zoos in New York City.

So far, 10,000 actions have been taken by Born Free supporters demanding that Patty be sent to a sanctuary and that New York implements regulations to end elephant captivity.

Each zoo we visit, more concerns come to light. In our most recent report from the San Francisco Zoo, we look back on the tragic death of a child following a tiger attack in 2007, as well as exploring recent concerns that the zoo is “dilapidated” and “unsafe for animals and visitors.”

In Colorado’s Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, visitors showed little interest in the animals held captive as exhibits; a pattern we saw repeated at every zoo we have visited. Spending an average of just 1 minute and 19 seconds looking at individual species, it raises serious questions regarding what possible educational value zoos can have when visitors care so little about looking at the animals. Meanwhile, the animals themselves suffer a lifetime in captivity – lifetimes that sometimes spans many decades – so that they can be merely glanced at by bored spectators.

A total of ten “leading” zoos will be explored as part of this project, with the remaining investigations being released over the course of the next 12 months. This body of work is creating a vital conversation around the lifetime captivity of wild animals and the claims of the zoo industry that it serves animal welfare, conservation, and educational purposes.

Explore the zoo reports at bornfreeusa.org/zooinvestigations. To take action to help Patty the elephant, please visit bornfreeusa.org/actforpatty.

NEW DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE LAUNCHES, LED BY ADVOCATE GERALYN GULSETH

Born Free USA is proud to announce the launch of its Development Committee, a new group of dedicated supporters and Board members who will help guide and strengthen the organization's fundraising efforts in the years ahead. Serving as the Committee's inaugural chair is Geralyn Gulseth, a longtime supporter and passionate advocate for animal welfare and wildlife conservation.

The Committee brings together engaged leaders willing to give their time, talents, and treasure to expand the community of support for Born Free USA's mission. Members serve as strategic advisors, network connectors, event champions, and ambassadors for our work protecting wildlife — opening doors to new donors and partners, lending their expertise to signature initiatives like the Wild at Heart gala and the Ambassador Conservation Experience, and helping dream up new ways for the wider community to get involved.

Fundraising for wildlife is a creative and challenging endeavor, and Born Free staff is thrilled and grateful to see this community coming together to help. Members meet monthly to discuss events, campaigns, and new ways for donors to become ambassadors for wildlife conservation.



GIVE STOCK AND SAVE WILDLIFE

Your investments can make a lasting difference for wildlife.

Many donors choose to support Born Free USA by giving appreciated stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or exchange-traded funds (ETFs). A gift of appreciated securities can provide significant support for our wildlife protection work while potentially offering tax benefits, including avoiding capital gains tax on the appreciation.

Recently, our supporter Greg made a generous gift of stock to Born Free USA. Greg explained "I made a stock donation because it puts the full amount of appreciated value to work with Born Free without either of us having to pay capital gains tax." He added, "I was prompted to make a large donation mostly by Born Free's efforts to eradicate trapping and the fur industry. Also, in 2012, I organized a campaign to defeat a ballot measure in Idaho that made hunting, fishing, and trapping constitutionally protected rights. I contacted several animal rights organizations asking for help with that campaign, and Born Free was the only one that responded. I have always felt grateful for that."

Your generosity can help us continue this vital work. Gifts of appreciated securities can be a powerful way to maximize your charitable impact while supporting Born Free USA's efforts to protect animals and end the exploitation of wildlife.

We are deeply grateful to our dedicated supporters and their passion for wildlife. Please consider making a gift of stock or another appreciated security today and join us in creating a kinder, more compassionate future for animals.

Learn more at bornfreeusa.org/stocks.



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TAX-SMART WAYS TO SUPPORT BORN FREE USA AND BE A LIFELINE FOR ANIMALS IN NEED

Many supporters are turning towards tax-smart gift options to support their own financial goals. These gifts include estates, appreciated stocks, a donor advised fund (DAF) or an IRA (must be 70+ to give). Talk with our Philanthropy Director, Erika Mathews, about tax-wise ways you can give to help the animals (erika@bornfreeusa.org).

By including Born Free USA in your plans, you become part of Elsa's Legacy Circle, a dedicated community ensuring that wild animals have a future filled with freedom and care.

Secure your legacy. Protect their future.

Visit bornfreeusa.org/plannedgiving or scan the QR code.

