

Spencer Lo <slo@nonhumanrights.org>

Fwd: Regarding Happy from Jim Breheny

Courtney Fern <cfern@nonhumanrights.org>
To: Spencer Lo <slo@nonhumanrights.org>

Sun, Jan 5, 2020 at 1:18 PM

From: Jim Breheny <JimBreheny@wcs.org>

Date: May 31, 2019 at 6:04:39 PM EDT
To: <tasha9954@gmail.com>
Subject: Regarding Happy
Reply-To: Jim Breheny <JimBreheny@wcs.org>



Thanks for your concern about Happy. We provide Happy and all the animals here at the Bronx Zoo with expert care based on species-specific requirements as well as their own individual physical and psychological needs.

Information is being circulated about our elephants that is inaccurate, misleading and lacks any direct knowledge about our individual elephants or their care.

When we announced in 2006 that we were planning to phase out the elephant exhibit at the Bronx Zoo, we clearly stated that we would continue to manage our elephants here, at the zoo, through the end of their lives; our statement at the time said we would re-assess our elephants' situation on a regular basis and always base our decisions on doing what is best for our animals.

Happy is not languishing. She is quite content and evaluated frequently by the people that know her best including the veterinarians that have cared for her for years as well as the keepers who interact with Happy for hours every day.

Obviously, we are well aware of her history and know how she came to live at the Bronx Zoo. We have been totally open and transparent regarding her story. And we certainly know the basic natural history facts regarding how elephants live in the wild. I'm always confused when the language in mass petitions and messages from individuals include these facts as if it would be new information for us.

The issue with Happy is that she, as an individual, is subordinate in nature and has always been at the bottom of any social grouping of elephants of which she has been a part.

Happy has consistently demonstrated to us that she is more comfortable with her keepers and with safe barriers between her and other elephants. The stress she felt whenever in the direct company of more dominant animals had a negative impact on her welfare. When one of our elephants, Maxine, was euthanized last November due to advanced cancer, we re-introduced Happy to Maxine's companion, Patty. We hoped with the change in herd structure and dynamics, the elephants might look to each other for companionship. We allowed the elephants to be together for a week, but unfortunately neither animal was comfortable in the company of the other and both elephants experienced different, yet obvious, levels of stress.

You can do an internet search on Happy and find our past responses to inquiries such as yours, and the attempts to get us to act by groups that know nothing of our individual animal, her personality, preferences or tendencies. Our position is a matter of record. We went further on record with Happy's story when we featured our elephants on the Animal Planet series THE ZOO so people would understand the facts and our position. The show clearly illustrates the care our staff provide for our elephants and the trust the animals have in their keepers. It allows people behind the scenes so they can see for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

Your email urges us to send Happy to a sanctuary. Many of the features you attribute to sanctuaries - water to swim in, mud to wallow in, vegetation to browse, and objects to interact with – are all features of our elephant exhibit. Additionally, each day our keepers provide our elephants with enrichment elements that offer them opportunities for choice and control. The main argument is that she should be with other elephants; but we know from years of working with Happy that she does not get along with other elephants. Our veterinarians, keepers, curators and I believe it is best for Happy to remain at the Bronx Zoo in her familiar surroundings with the people she knows and trusts. At almost 50 years of age, we feel it is not in her best interest and it is a big risk to transport her to another facility and to try to have her assimilate into an established group of elephants; in fact, we believe it could be to her detriment.

We are dedicated to providing the best care and welfare to all the animals we have at the Bronx Zoo. And we will always base our decisions on doing what is best for our animals.

Happy will continue to live at the Bronx Zoo where we feel she is very content and we know she is well cared for.

Sincerely,



Jim Breheny
WCS Executive Vice President of Zoos and Aquarium
Director of the Bronx Zoo



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