

**Testimony of
Dr. Jane Goodall
Founder, the Jane Goodall Institute**

**Before the
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans**

March 11, 2008

Thank you for this opportunity to express my strong support for the Captive Primate Safety Act. It is a pleasure to be here on this important matter.

The Jane Goodall Institute is dedicated to ensuring that captive primates receive the attention and care they deserve—attention and care which cannot be provided by the average pet owner. We therefore fully support the legislation introduced by Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson to prohibit the interstate commerce of monkeys, chimpanzees and other primates as pets.

Non-human primates seem attractive as pets largely due to their close physical and behavioral similarities to humans. But, due in part to the genetic similarities we share, all non-human primates can carry a variety of rare and sometimes fatal diseases and viruses that can be contracted by humans, including tuberculosis, herpes-B, hepatitis, and Ebola.

All too often, well-intentioned animal enthusiasts will attempt to raise and care for an infant primate, such as a chimpanzee. But chimpanzees and other primates grow up quickly. In fact, by the age of five, chimpanzees are often stronger than human adults. They become destructive, difficult to contain, and dangerous. When they escape—a risk that is much greater when they are moved from one place to another—, they may pose a unique threat to public health and safety, and their capture can be costly. Many kinds of monkeys, marmosets, lemurs and other prosimians are in homes across America. These animals can infect us with disease and inflict serious bites.

While some pet owners take steps to tame or control their non-human primate pets, these measures often are inhumane or not reliable. Regardless of the steps taken to tame and control non-human primates, once they reach sexual maturity it can be difficult if not impossible to contain and appropriately care for them, for essentially they remain wild animals. As a consequence, a once pampered member of the family is relegated to a small, inappropriate cage, often in a basement or garage because, when free, they can, and will, bite. Non-human primate owners have lost fingers, suffered facial and other physical damage and contracted dangerous diseases from their “pets.”

Non-human primates—even the small species such as tamarins or marmosets—have complicated needs that are impossible for the average pet owner to provide. Non-human primates are behaviorally more like us, and as such they are uniquely intelligent creatures and

need complex sensory stimuli to meet their psychological needs. They need space and a rich environment; they need social groups within which they can establish social bonds for, above all, most non-human primates are highly social creatures. Keeping them alone is psychologically stressful and damaging, as is moving them from one place to another.

When kept as “pets,” once they reach maturity and are no longer manageable, those individuals who are not placed in small, barren enclosures are often sold or donated to unaccredited zoos or research institutions, or euthanized.

It is time for us to end this dangerous, selfish and inhumane trade. Non-human primates of all sizes have complex minds, personalities and emotions and do not belong in our homes and pet shops.

I applaud the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans for considering this important legislation. I urge you to do all you can to pass it. In doing so, you will be promoting public health and safety, as well as taking a reasonable and sound step toward protecting these amazing wild creatures.

In addition, while I am here to support the Captive Primate Safety Act, I am also concerned for all wildlife and feel that it is vital to prevent poaching, whether it's related to the bushmeat trade or the slaughter of wild animals for their parts or products made from them. I would like to express my complete support to stop the trade in bear gallbladders and bear bile. I have seen the terrible suffering this inflicts on these animals. I strongly support the Bear Protection Act and hope you will approve it when the time comes.