



Wild Animals in Captivity

Rob Laidlaw

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"On the School Library Journal's Best Books 2008 list

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Good Zoos! Bad Zoos!!

A large family of elephants ambles all day along a well-remembered route across the hot African savanna. Halfway around the world in a zoo in Alaska, a single female elephant paces back and forth in her cramped, concrete pen. During the sub-arctic winter, she lives alone in a dark barn.

As it plods great distances across the ice in the Canadian Arctic, a polar bear continually sniffs the wind, closing in on a ringed seal. In a zoo in Jakarta, another polar bear lies motionless on the concrete floor of its enclosure, panting in the tropical heat. Its fur has turned green from the algae growing inside its hollow guard hairs.

These scenes are at the heart of "Wild Animals in Captivity" - a book that focuses on wild animals living in captivity around the world. "Captive animals become stressed when they try to act naturally, but can't," the author writes. "In many zoos, you'll see them pacing, weaving, or sitting motionless. This is the animal's way of telling us that it's bored and unhappy. Wild animals need a rich and varied environment-things to do, space to roam, social groups, families to care for."

This is an eye-opening look at the lives of captive wild animals-at bad zoos, good zoos, and the best wild animal sanctuaries.

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