



## Welcome to the October 2023 Zoocheck News & Views!

Zoocheck's monthly e-newsletter featuring campaign news, opinion pieces, interesting information, upcoming events and more.

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## 10th Anniversary of Moving Toronto Elephants to California

This month marks the 10th anniversary of Zoocheck's campaign to secure the release of the Toronto Zoo's last three surviving elephants (Toka, Thika and Iringa) and their subsequent 4,300 km transport to the PAWS sanctuary in California. The campaign attracted a great deal of attention in Canada and around the world.

[Read the Full Blog](#)

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## Serval on the Loose - Another exotic animal escape from one of Ontario's unregulated roadside zoos

Throughout the years, the private ownership of exotic wild animals in roadside zoos, wildlife menageries and being kept as pets has led to a multitude of animal escapes and incidents, some resulting in human injury or death.

The lack of regulations for exotic wild animal possession, care, safety and welfare allow anyone to acquire animals and to keep them at a standard of their choosing. You don't need to know what you're doing to keep exotic animals in Ontario. That's why Ontario has frequently been referred to as Canada's "wild west" of exotic animals.

Escapes in the past have involved wolves, tigers, lions, jaguars, cougars, servals, monkeys, lemurs, bears, venomous snakes and a vast array of other animal species. This latest escape in Ontario is just one of a long line of incidents that show the province needs to step up and, once and for all, deal with the exotic animal problem.

Zoocheck began investigating roadside zoos and exotic pets back in the early 1980s when almost nothing was known about them or the exotic pet trade. Since that time we have been involved in almost all of the initiatives aimed at rectifying the problem. There have been no less than 15 attempts to obtain provincial licensing and regulations for the keeping of exotic wildlife in captivity.

Remarkably, all political parties and most of the stakeholders, including many roadside zoo owners, have acknowledged the need for rules, but the province has never acted. Meanwhile other provinces did to one degree or another so, today, the roadside zoo problem is largely centered in Ontario. Reportedly, Ontario will be "examining" this issue yet again in 2024, but what that means remains to be seen.

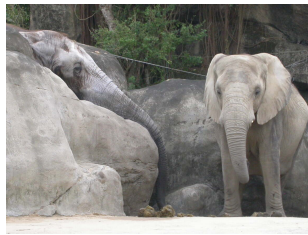
While the Province of Ontario waffles back and forth, the new Provincial Animal Welfare Services branch has taken some action to address some problems, including at Waddles 'n' Wags zoo where the most recent escape of a serval occurred. The PAWS actions are very welcome but the Province needs to step up. Ontario needs to establish meaningful licensing and rules to protect animals and the public and to prevent unqualified people from acquiring exotic wild animals in the first place.

Write to Michael Kerzner, [Solicitor General of Ontario](#) and urge him to push forward with a strict licensing regime and comprehensive regulations for the keeping of exotic wildlife in captivity under the Provincial Animal Welfare Act as soon as possible.

Read the Bancroft Times story by clicking the link below.

[Read the Story](#)

[More about Ontario's exotic animals](#)



## Do Zoos Save Elephants from Extinction? I'd Say No

An Opinion Commentary by Barry Kent MacKay (October 2023)

Those of us involved in conservation keep reading in news articles that rhino horn is used as an aphrodisiac, presumably a primal form of Viagra. Nope. Not true; it's used for everything from dagger handles to headaches, but not to help men be more manly! However, the meme is so well established it seems impossible to stamp out, almost as difficult as trying to convince folks there is no such species as a sea gull, among some 54 actual species of gull.

And here's another such idea that keeps appearing – that zoos are protecting elephants from extinction. The latest iteration I know of came from KWCH, a Kansas radio news station on September 15th, trumpeting the news that Sedgwick County Zoo is transporting Ajani, a 23 year old male African Elephant, to the Toledo Zoo, Ohio, "...for the betterment of the species."

Bull! The Sedgwick County Zoo keepers were overflowing with anthropomorphic praise for Ajani. "His gentle nature taught the females how caring a bull can be." He also was a role model for Titan, a younger male.

News flash: Elephants don't do all that well in traditional zoo captivity. Their physiology evolved to require conditions, including an ability to travel longer distances over more variable substrates, that zoos cannot provide. Captive elephants tend to develop various chronic ailments including painful arthritis,

as well as psychological issues, such as boredom, frustration and anxiety, to name just three. The reality is that zoos don't come close to simulating the social conditions and stimulus complexity found in the wild.

[Read the Full Blog](#)

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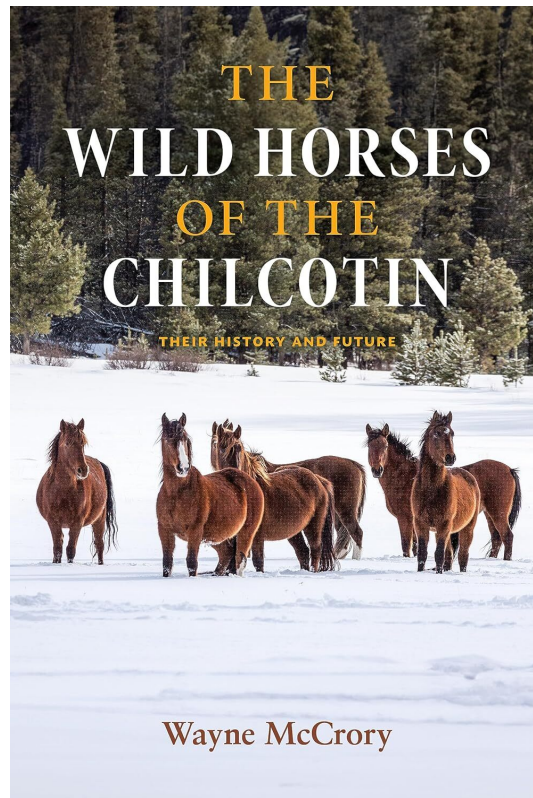
## Killing a Conservation Success Story - The Double-crested Cormorant

Learn more about the Double-crested cormorant issue in Ontario and why these magnificent native waterbirds should be protected. Cormorants are just the latest in a long line of animal species that have been scapegoated for problems caused by human activities. Click the button below to listen to the podcast featuring avian scientist Dr. Keith Hobson.

Will any other species be next in line? In recent years, pelicans have moved into southern Ontario, most showing up in Lake Erie, with occasional individuals turning up elsewhere, including on Lake Ontario. In 2016, more than 1500 pelicans were estimated to be in the Pelee Island region. As their numbers grow, we wonder if they will be next in line of fire because they also eat fish and modify vegetation where they congregate. Will they join cormorants as Ontario's next targeted species? We'll have more on pelicans in the coming months.

[Listen to Podcast #166](#)

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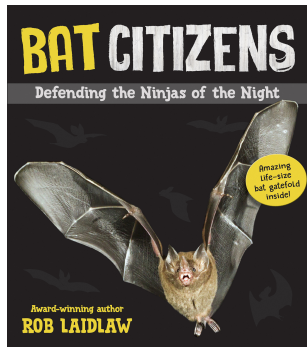
**Important new book, *The Wild Horses of the Chilcotin: Their History and Future*, by renowned ecologist Wayne McCrory. Now available for pre-order from most booksellers.**

The Chilcotin's wild horses are romantic and beautiful, but they are also controversial: they are seen by government policy as intruders competing for range land with native species and domestic cattle and, as a result, they have been subject to culls and are not officially protected

In this compelling book, wildlife biologist Wayne McCrory draws upon two decades of research to make a case for considering these wonderful creatures, called qiyus in traditional T̓silhqot'in culture, a resilient part of the area's balanced prey-predator ecosystem. McCrory also chronicles the Chilcotin wild horses' genetic history and significance to the T̓silhqot'in, juxtaposing their efforts to protect qiyus against movements to cull them.

[More About the Book](#)

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## FREE COPIES OF Bat Citizens, Defending the Ninjas of the Night

by Zoocheck director Rob Laidlaw.

An outstanding holiday season gift for any child (or adult) interested in wildlife or for anyone wanting to learn more about bats. The book is for readers aged 8 – 12 years, but can be read by anyone regardless of age. A treasure trove of information about bats. Click the Order Bat Citizens button below to read what others have said about this outstanding book.

This FREE BOOK OFFER is for Canadian supporters and friends only. Bulk orders are available for teachers, librarians and organized children's groups. This offer ends when the books run out, so don't delay.

The books are free. All you have to do is cover the postage (\$5.35 for individual books in Canada). For multiple copy postage costs, please email [zoocheck@zoocheck.com](mailto:zoocheck@zoocheck.com).

If you want to add in a holiday donation in support of Zoocheck's wildlife protection work, please feel free to do so, but it is not required.

ORDER YOUR COPY OF BAT CITIZENS TODAY! CLICK THE BUTTON TO FIND OUT HOW.

[Order Bat Citizens](#)

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**The holiday gift-giving season will soon be here! Give someone a unique Barry Kent MacKay work and help wildlife at the same time!**

Barry Kent MacKay, renowned Canadian wildlife artist, writer, naturalist and conservationist has painted birds and other wildlife from around the world for decades. His works can be found in homes, offices, institutions and a multitude of other venues across the country.

Check out Barry's website to see what paintings, reproductions and other items are currently available. If you'd like to purchase original artwork (also at the link below), please email [zoocheck@zoocheck.com](mailto:zoocheck@zoocheck.com) and we'll put you in touch with Barry directly as original works are not sold through the website.

[View the Artwork](#)

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**Support Wildlife Protection - Make a Donation Today!**

Help us as we work to improve wildlife protection, and end the abuse, neglect and exploitation of wild animals in Canada and around the world!

[Donate](#)



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