

# ASA Forum



for public discussion and debate

## Animals in Denver

As members of the ASA's Animals and Society Section, we see evidence of humans' complicated relationships with other animals almost everywhere we look, including in the January 2012 *Footnotes*' promotional materials for the 2012 ASA meeting in Denver. In a recent column, along with tours of the U.S. Mint and a brewery, the ASA promoted the opportunity to eat buffalo meat and visit wild animals confined in a zoo—which it referred to as a “wonderland”—as attractions that might pique peoples' interest in attending the conference. Yet, the magnificent soaring hawks and wild buffalo herds roaming in the nearby foothills didn't get a mention.

Though many of us take it for granted, or maybe never realized it at all, animals play a central role in all of our lives. We encourage people to attend our sessions at the forthcoming ASA conference and join our section if they are interested in hearing about, discussing, or contributing to our work that explores how and why animals are a part of our society.

Jessica Greenebaum, President, ASA Section on Animals and Society Section

## Animal Exploration

In the January issue of *Footnotes*, the ASA promoted its 2012 Annual Meeting in part by encouraging members to visit the Denver Zoo. In addition, eating buffalo meat was a suggested activity. We have some concerns with these suggestions and encourage ASA and its membership to expand their sociological imaginations to incorporate and evaluate our relationships to other animals.

The exploitation of animals for our entertainment is problematic. Confinement in zoos precludes natural behaviors, and frequently results in pathological behavior, including repetitive, purposeless movements such as rocking, pacing or swaying. The position of the Humane Society of the United States

(HSUS) is that free-living animals “should ideally be permitted to exist undisturbed in their natural environments” and urges zoos to act as sanctuaries, “providing facilities for animals in need rather than breeding them for exhibition purposes...” The debatable benefits of zoos for conservation can be better met by preserving and protecting habitat, supplemented with sanctuaries for those animals requiring assistance.

Of late, the issue of keeping elephants in zoos has aroused particular concern. A 2008 study reported in the journal *Science* found that elephants in zoos die considerably younger than free-living elephants, with only one-third the lifespan. As many major zoos around the nation have begun eliminating elephant exhibits due to concerns for the animals' well-being, the Denver Zoo is in the process of building a new elephant exhibit. Named to honor a primary donor, it will be called the *Toyota Elephant Passage*.

Using other animals as food is also of concern, particularly in more affluent nations where it is known to be a primary factor contributing to global environmental destruction, pollution, climate change, world hunger, regional violence, and the rapid depletion of such vital finite resources as fresh water, topsoil, and fossil fuel.

Many educated people who have become familiar with the terrible treatment of animals on factory farms and related environmental and sustainability problems are opting to eat locally raised animals. Promoting the upcoming meetings in *Footnotes*, ASA staff encourages members to eat buffalo while in Denver for an “authentic taste of the Old West.” However, though the consumption of local buffalo—and all locally produced animal products—is popularly promoted as “green” and progressive, it still unavoidably produces suffering, leaves a damaging environmental footprint, and sends an unfortunate message.

The lives of animals raised for food—including many who are purportedly “humanely” raised—are tortured ones, largely characterized by confinement, abuse, and violence. As HSUS notes, “While some animals may suffer less than others, they still

suffer, and the claims made on these labels can mislead consumers about how well the animals are actually treated.” Regardless of production conditions, the consumption of other animals' flesh, milk, and eggs represents a relationship of oppression that ignores other animals' interests in living free of human dominion.

Many, if not most, “locavores” are unaware of the disastrous consequences of eating other animals noted above but merely seek to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing their energy consumption. However, studies now suggest that the practice of eating locally raised animals actually requires *more* energy than shipping plant-based food longer distances—especially when the necessity for meat refrigeration is calculated.

Perhaps such issues and concerns can be discussed among ASA members and staff, and the planning and promotion of future annual meetings could include consideration of the environmental and moral issues related to human use of other animals.

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## Buyer Beware: Publishing in an Era of Predatory Publishers

My colleagues and I recently looked into the expanding field of disreputable publication venues. We sought to discern the good from the bad (the ugly ones were easy to spot). What follows is a brief listing of some of our findings regarding online, predatory publishers.

First and foremost, predatory publishers are business ventures. Their goal is to make a profit for their owners. Predatory publishers are run by a small board of undistinguished directors. These individuals are shareholders, not noteworthy scholars. They may or may not be affiliated with academic institutions. (Almost) all predatory journals look professional and legitimate (the rest are ugly). To feign legitimacy, predatory journals are quick to state they are indexed by leading indexing and citation organizations. However, if you check with the indexing organization, the publisher may not actually be listed.

Predatory publishers often take the form of umbrella organizations. The company may have a “global” editorial board separate from the journals themselves. They always have a substantial editorial board for each journal they offer. Each editorial board may exceed (50 or even 100) members. These boards include many untenured academics, non-academics and students who have actively sought to serve as members, in order to add the role of journal editor to their vitae. In addition, people who have been published in the journal are added to the boards.

Established journals (under the auspices of professional organizations) may or may not charge submission fees, ranging from free to about \$50, whereas, predatory publishers emphasize publication fees rather than submission fees. The current market value for publishing in these journals ranges from \$200 to more than \$500 per manuscript. While a few legitimate open access publishers also charge publication fees, most do not.

Predatory publishers capitalize primarily on academics seeking tenure. To do so, they maximize their visibility. Predatory publishers use spam email to solicit manuscripts. These predatory journals promise very quick decisions (often two weeks). Many list numerous journals under their umbrella, covering every academic discipline. Each journal accepts submissions from numerous academic disciplines. Some journals produce more than one issue per month. Some offer one (or more) “special issues” each month in addition to the regular issue number. A quick scan will show there is nothing special about the special issues.

To provide rapid turnaround, predatory publishers also broadcast spam email to solicit reviewers. The application form rarely requires applicants to demonstrate professional competence and expertise. These forms simply ask how many manuscripts they are willing to review each month.

Upon receipt, manuscripts are often farmed out by broadcast email to the email list of reviewers and board members. All predatory journals say they use a peer-review process. Most reviewers are not “peers” if

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