



Sickening animal cruelty videos rife on YouTube

A new World Animal Protection investigation further exposes the shocking scale of a cruel and worrying new craze on YouTube

A new World Animal Protection investigation further exposes the shocking scale of a cruel and worrying new craze on YouTube – the rise of videos depicting fake animal rescues involving wildlife.

In these videos, an animal, such as a monkey or dog, is filmed to be the prey and is set upon by a large predator, such as a snake. The videos show scenes such as a panicked monkey being trapped in the grip of a reticulated python, as they cry out and desperately try to break free.

Although the prey animals are eventually 'rescued', they face visible trauma from a cruel set-up inflicted for entertainment.

This follows on from a recent investigation by Lady Freethinker that identified 17 such videos, across six different channels, collectively accumulating over 40 million views.

In their report Views that abuse, researchers from World Animal Protection have uncovered:

- Over 180 videos showing fake animal rescues – all published between October 2018 and May 2021.
- Seventy of which were uploaded in 2021 alone, signifying a worrying upsurge in this cruel type of entertainment.
- The 50 most viewed fake animal rescue videos were uploaded from 28 different channels, resulting in a total of 13 million subscribers, over 133 million views and half a million "likes".
- The videos most frequently feature dogs and Burmese pythons as the most common "prey-predator" combination.
- One single video showing a fake rescue of a monitor lizard from a python attack had been viewed over 100 million times.

Animal advocate, comedian, actor, and director, Ricky Gervais, has spoken out on the videos, calling on YouTube to take action. He said:

"Just when you think you've heard it all, humans think of another way to be cruel to animals.

"Social media giants like YouTube should be on the front foot when it comes to banning this disgusting content from their platforms.

"We can and should protect animals, but we can't do this without serious action from the companies that enable their abuse."

Concerningly, the investigation found that 47 new fake animal rescue videos have been posted since the end of March 2021, after YouTube publicly

pledged to crack down on animal cruelty content. These videos came from 15 different channels with over 2.7 million subscribers and have collectively accumulated over 7 million views.

Due to the popularity and viewing numbers, the content producers will also be making money from advertising, profiting directly from people who watch animals suffer.

Along with the animal welfare implications, the investigation also highlights serious conservation concerns associated with this type of entertainment, as 'Endangered' and 'Critically Endangered'[1] species such as the Siamese crocodile, Elongated tortoise, and Lar gibbon feature in the videos.

The global NGO has written to YouTube, calling for them to live up to their promise and act on this issue urgently.

Ben Pearson, Head of Campaigns, World Animal Protection Australia and New Zealand said:

"This shocking cruelty has serious welfare implications for all animals involved. There is no doubt that the animals in these videos will have suffered from injuries and severe psychological trauma, just for cheap thrills for viewers at home.

"Typical filming takes time, meaning long periods of suffering. It's unknown how many more animals died or were injured behind the scenes, and even those filming are putting themselves at risk.

"Each day that these clips stay online, the more popular this phenomenon becomes. If urgent action isn't taken, we could see a whole surge of copycat content emerge – putting more animals and people at risk.

"Whether it's the prey or predators, these sentient beings are not props, playthings or entertainers for shocking YouTube videos – they are wild animals who belong in the wild."

At the time this report was published, some of the fake animal rescue videos had been taken down in response to media attention focused on this issue. However, the vast majority of the content described in this report was still publicly available.

World Animal Protection is calling on YouTube to live up to its promise and immediately remove the abusive content that clearly violates its stated community standards[2]. Longer term, YouTube should publicly share their plans to proactively prevent cruel content going up in the first place rather than relying on the public to report it.

-ENDS-

[1] Official status according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

[2] YouTube's guidelines explicitly list the following as prohibited: 'Content where there's infliction of unnecessary suffering or harm deliberately causing an animal distress' and 'Content where animals are encouraged or coerced to fight by humans' -

https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802008?hl=en&ref_topic=9282436

Notes to the editor:

- For an interview with a spokesperson, contact Sandra Sopin at ssopin@worldanimalprotection.org.au
- Read the full report: [Views that abuse](#)
- Video and images available here. We are applying a fair use/fair dealing policy to the images and videos sourced from YouTube under the Australian Copyright Act.

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