

Sendt: 02.06.2012 08:59
Fra: Lina Sideras
Til: inselle@online.no
Kopi: robbrandford@sheldrickwildlifetrust.org
Emne: Re: Elephant Baba

Dear Inge Sellevaag,

Your Email of June 1st regarding the stereotypic behaviour of elephant Baba in a Norwegian circus has been passed to me for comment. I have been hand-rearing elephant calves, orphaned by the demand for ivory in the far East, for the past 50 years, and to date have successfully hand-reared over 174 orphaned elephant young, two from the day of birth. All our elephants are returned back where they rightly belong when grown, amongst the wild Elephant community of Kenya's largest national park - Tsavo - currently home to the country's largest single elephant population, numbering some 10,000. Elephants duplicate us humans in terms of age progression, with an identical expected lifespan, and having been with them most of my 78 years, I can rightly claim to know them intimately. Our work can be viewed at www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org

Rearing the young has proved beyond doubt that elephants duplicate us humans emotionally, and in many respects are superior to us in terms of caring and nurturing even when just infants themselves. Like us, the most important thing to an elephant is its family, its friends and a quality of life. Like humans, elephants do not belong in boxes or in cages, since in order to enjoy a quality of life they need each other and more than that space. 100 miles is simply a little stroll for an elephant, something that has been demonstrated time and again rearing their orphaned young.

The training of performing circus elephants is brutal in the extreme, aimed at breaking the spirit of the animal. They are forced through fear of reprisals should they disobey to perform unnatural acts for the so-called entertainment of humans. That "Elephants Do Not Forget" has been scientifically proven through a study of the elephant brain which is far superior to that of a human in terms of memory. That they also reason and think is also indicated by the similar convolutions of the brain. (One of our ex orphans, now living a normal wild life, voluntarily returned to the rehabilitation centre in Tsavo and instantly recognized a keeper she had not seen for 37 years who just happened to be visiting on that day!) With elephants, one reaps what one sows. Handled with loving care and kindness will reap the same from an elephant, but handled with cruelty is a recipe for disaster. Our ex orphans now living wild, who have had their own wild-born babies, bring them back to the rehabilitation centres from whence they were returned to the wild community, simply to share their joy with their erstwhile human family. All this is recorded through the keepers'

diaries in the orphans section of our website, and with images as well. More than that they have returned with wild elephant friends who have just stood by and watched the human family enter the herd and actually handle the newborn as it shelters beneath its mother's belly. There can be no greater accolade from an elephant to a human than that!

By nature elephants are gentle and caring, who live amicably with all other creatures that share their space which do not pose a threat to them or their young, but they can be dangerous when the time comes that they feel they have to settle the score. Stereotypic behaviour of circus or zoo elephants indicates psychosis due to the cruel and unnatural conditions in which they are held and is indicative of frustration and psychological suffering. It is not natural for an elephant to have to stand on a stool, or on its head, and perform unnatural acts for the so-called entertainment of humans, added to which there should be nothing entertaining in seeing an unfortunate captive, deprived of its family and friends, who has been turned semi mad by being forced to endure cruelty and deprivation. Britain has passed law to ban the keeping of elephants in circuses and now that so much more is known about these highly intelligent animals, who duplicate us humans emotionally, I would hope that all civilized countries would do the same.

I hope the above comments are useful.

With best wishes,

Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick DBE MBE MBS DVMS