Smile - You've Just Killed My Mum... Charity launches hard hitting campaign to halt tourist photos with captive wild animals

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Having your photo taken with a wild animal in a tourist resort is rewarding animal abuse and can cause the death of 50 animals for every one used in the picture, claims a wildlife charity.

Presenting their new campaign No Photos, Please!, at yesterday's World Responsible Tourism Day event at the World Travel Market, Care for the Wild International is attempting to persuade tourists to resist the temptation of having a photo taken with a 'cute' animal like a slow loris or tiger cub.

Animals used for these photos are generally likely to:

• Have been taken from their family at a young age, and their mother inevitably killed
• Be the one survivor out of up to 50 animals killed in the process
• Have had their teeth and claws ripped out, painfully, to prevent them fighting back
• Be kept in dreadful conditions – they are working animals, not pets
• Be dumped/killed when they are no longer cute enough for photos

Care for the Wild CEO Philip Mansbridge said:

"It's very easy to get caught up in the moment when you're on holiday, so having your photo taken with a cute wild animal may seem like a good idea at the time. But if people knew the true story behind these animals then we think they'll learn to say no.

"If you see a wild animal that isn't in the wild, then it's time to ask questions. If it's a young animal, where's its mum? Where are its teeth and claws? Why is it so tame? The answers are probably dead, ripped out, and because it's terrified. To me, that's not the setting for a fun Facebook photo."

The No Photos, Please! campaign, part of the charity's RIGHT-tourism.org project to help animals in tourism, features three hard-hitting posters which will be translated into different languages. The messages are:

• Smile! You've just killed my mum
• Photo for Facebook? You've just 'liked' animal abuse
• Say 1-2-3 Ouch! Flash photography damages nocturnal animals' eyes

Philip Mansbridge said: "The campaign is quite hard-hitting because we need people to take notice. We're not blaming anyone for having done this in the past, but hopefully now we can get the message out. Please don't pay for a photo with a wild animal. The best thing you can do is keep your money in your pocket – if the trade stops, then they'll leave the animals in the wild, where they belong."

Key messages for tourists are:

1) Don't be fooled by the 'bond' between owner and animal – the loris is purely an income driving tool, not a pet, and the industry is run by organised criminal gangs, not individuals.
2) Don't be fooled into thinking that the loris is relaxed and happy – they have a defence mechanism that makes them freeze or extremely docile when under stress.
3) Don't be fooled into thinking that one quick photo won't hurt – it will. Each and every photo taken is keeping the industry alive.
4) Don't be tempted to try and 'rescue' the animal by buying it from the trader. You'll have a hard time finding a home for it, and it'll simply lead to another animal being taken from the wild to fill the space. Keep your hands in your pocket and walk away.

To read more go to http://www.RIGHT-tourism.org RIGHT-tourism.org is a project aimed at informing tourists about how to enjoy wildlife on holiday without harming it. It is run by Care for the Wild International.

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