

Zoo Livestreams for Social Isolation

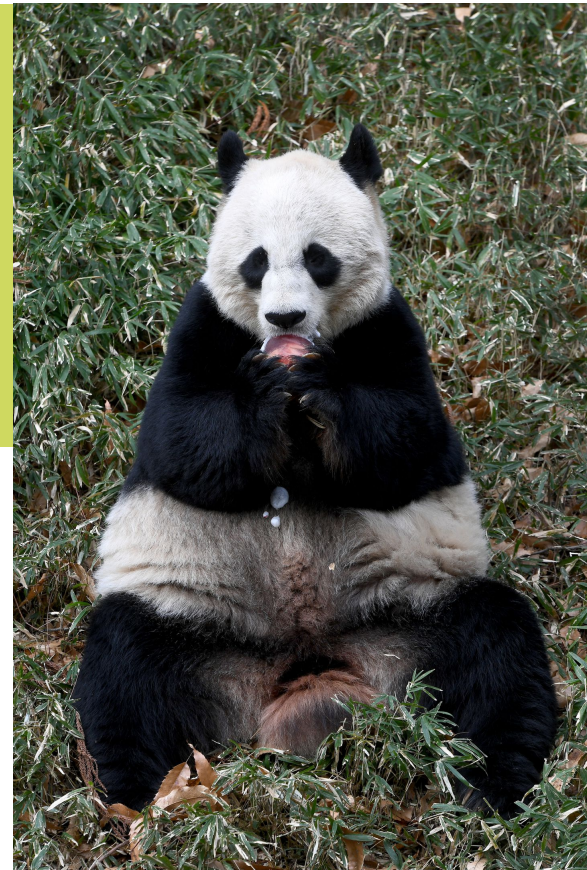
March 15th, 2021

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Effects of Animals on Stress and Social Isolation

It is well known that zoos and animals have both a physiological and psychosocial effect on humans. There is a wide belief that people visit zoos or care for the environment in order to fulfill an emotional need to connect with animals (Hosey & Melfi, 2014). The biophilia hypothesis suggests that our dependence on nature reaches well beyond our physical dependence to include an aesthetic, cognitive, and spiritual dependence (Hosey & Melfi, 2014). Human-animal interactions can provide social support and reduce isolation, reduce depression and anxiety, and increase quality of life and life satisfaction for older adults (Gee et al., 2017).

A study done by Sakagami & Ohta (2010) showed that visiting zoos caused a significant decrease in blood pressure, eliciting a response similar to those when interacting with animals; therefore, visiting a zoo can help us cope with stress, such as stress from work or from social isolation, as exhibited by the current pandemic. Another study showed that as people were exposed to aquariums of marine biota for longer, people became calmer and experienced more positivity; however, as people were exposed to more marine biota, their calmness decreased, but positivity increased (Cracknell et al., 2015). With these findings, live broadcasts of aquariums may be perfect, since you can watch them for as long as you want, but people aren't overwhelmed by a large amount of biota experienced in the physical setting of an aquarium.



Zoos with Livestreams of Animals

Worldwide, more than 700 million people visit zoos and aquariums annually (Gusset & Dick, 2011). With the pandemic, even though most zoos are closed to the public, we can continue to find ways to create human-animal interactions in order to combat social isolation among older adults.

Here are a few sources that have a variety of wildlife, both land and marine. Keep in mind, there are many more zoos from around the world that offer livestreams of their animals! The San Diego Zoo has livestreams of many different wildlife, including hippos, penguins, polar bears, tigers, elephants, and more. While there is no longer a livestream of their pandas, there is an archive of videos from January-April 2019. The Monterey Bay Aquarium, located in Monterey, California offers livestreams of jellyfish, otters, sharks, their open sea exhibit, and more. Finally, the Houston Zoo offers livestreams of gorilla, elephants, flamingos, and more.

Follow the below links for the live streams and animal descriptions.

<https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>

<https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>

<https://www.houstonzoo.org/explore/webcams/>

References

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