

September 9, 2016

Ellen V. Futter
President
American Museum of Natural History

Via e-mail: futter@amnh.org

Dear Ms. Futter,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 5 million members and supporters worldwide regarding the American Museum of Natural History's "Crocs: Ancient Predators in a Modern World" exhibit. We are extremely concerned about the animals who are confined to this enclosure and urge you to end the exhibit and send them to reputable sanctuaries. In addition, we are disturbed by the signage that encourages people to buy exotic skins. PETA has received messages from citizens concerned about the well-being of the crocodiles and alligators on exhibit and the shocking messaging that supports the factory farming of crocodilians. As you must know, the public is increasingly opposed to the use of wild animals for entertainment as well as to the use of exotic-animal skins for clothing and bags.

Alligators, crocodiles, and other exotic reptiles are wild animals who suffer in captivity, and their inherently predatory nature and hard-to-meet needs can lead to tragic consequences. In the wild, alligators roam freely with members of their own kind, travel long distances, and thrive in rivers and lakes—their natural homes. In captivity, they're exposed to loud crowds and screaming children, who incessantly bang on their glass tanks, exposing animals to trauma, behavioral stress, and unnecessary discomfort that could cause one or more of these animals to lash out against caretakers or the public with little to no provocation, potentially causing serious injuries or even death.

Crocodiles and alligators also suffer in the exotic-skins trade. From Texas to Zimbabwe, PETA investigators have [documented](#) the appalling conditions in which animals are [factory-farmed](#) for "luxury" Birkin bags as well as other bags, belts, and watchbands. Alligators are packed in dank pools, and crocodiles are crowded in barren concrete pits for months or even years before finally being slaughtered for their skins. Workers crudely hacked into the necks of some alligators and tried to scramble their brains with metal rods. Some animals were still conscious, flailing and kicking, even minutes after workers tried to kill them.

The AMNH's crocodile display teaches the dangerous anti-conservationist message that wild animals are ours to dominate and display in tiny tanks for profit, which is certainly not in line with the museum's mission: "To discover, interpret, and disseminate—through scientific research and education—knowledge about human cultures, the natural world, and the universe." **May I please hear from you by September 16 that you will immediately retire the alligators and crocodiles on display and stop encouraging people to buy cruelly produced exotic skins?** We look forward to updating our members and supporters on this important issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached at 516-592-3722 or JohnD@peta.org.

Sincerely yours,

John Di Leonardo, M.S.
Animals in Entertainment Campaigner
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

September 27, 2016

Anne Canty
Senior Vice President, Communications and Marketing
American Museum of Natural History

Dear Ms. Canty,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us last week. Please take a moment to watch PETA's eyewitness [video](#) to understand the reality for crocodiles and alligators used for skins, which you promote with your signage.

As we mentioned, we love that you're trying to educate people about alligators and crocodiles, but we urge you to do so in a way that is honest and humane, in order to inspire people. Confining intelligent, sensitive live animals to tiny glass boxes and misleading people through false and damaging signage (e.g., "Use 'em or lose 'em" to encourage people to purchase animal skins) contradicts your mission of inspiring people. In the museum's online video, Mark Norell, the exhibit's curator, says, "I hope that people leave with a greater appreciation of just how specialized these animals are, just how beautiful they are, and just how important they are within the ecosystems in which they function." To accomplish that, we encourage you to be creative and compassionate and replace this exhibit with something that truly inspires and instills in people a greater appreciation for animals, a love for nature, an understanding of life on Earth, and an appreciation for conservation. The dinosaur wing of the museum perfectly illustrates your ability to do this and exemplifies how unnecessary it is for children to see live animals in the flesh in order to be inspired to learn about them. In fact, the only thing that young people learn from seeing live animals in captivity is that it's acceptable to confine them. [A study](#) of nearly 3,000 children, published last year in *Conservation Biology*, showed that nearly two-thirds of children who observed animals in captivity **showed no change in learning or learned incorrectly**. If animal welfare is truly a concern of yours, you will understand why we're asking that you align your mission with your actions by shutting down this exhibit.

You mentioned that you try to provide the animals with comfort and accommodations, but of course, that's impossible in an exhibit with animals who, in nature, would roam freely with members of their own kind, travel long distances of up to 2 miles, and thrive in rivers and lakes, their natural homes. **Even the exhibit's signage acknowledges their specific needs and natural behavior, which is quite ironic, given that they're denied the opportunity to express all the types of natural behavior described.**

We look forward to hearing that you will close this exhibit. **If we don't hear back by Monday, we will be left with no other choice but to alert our members and supporters that the museum is not interested in addressing this important issue.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Di Leonardo, M.S.
Animals in Entertainment Campaigner
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals